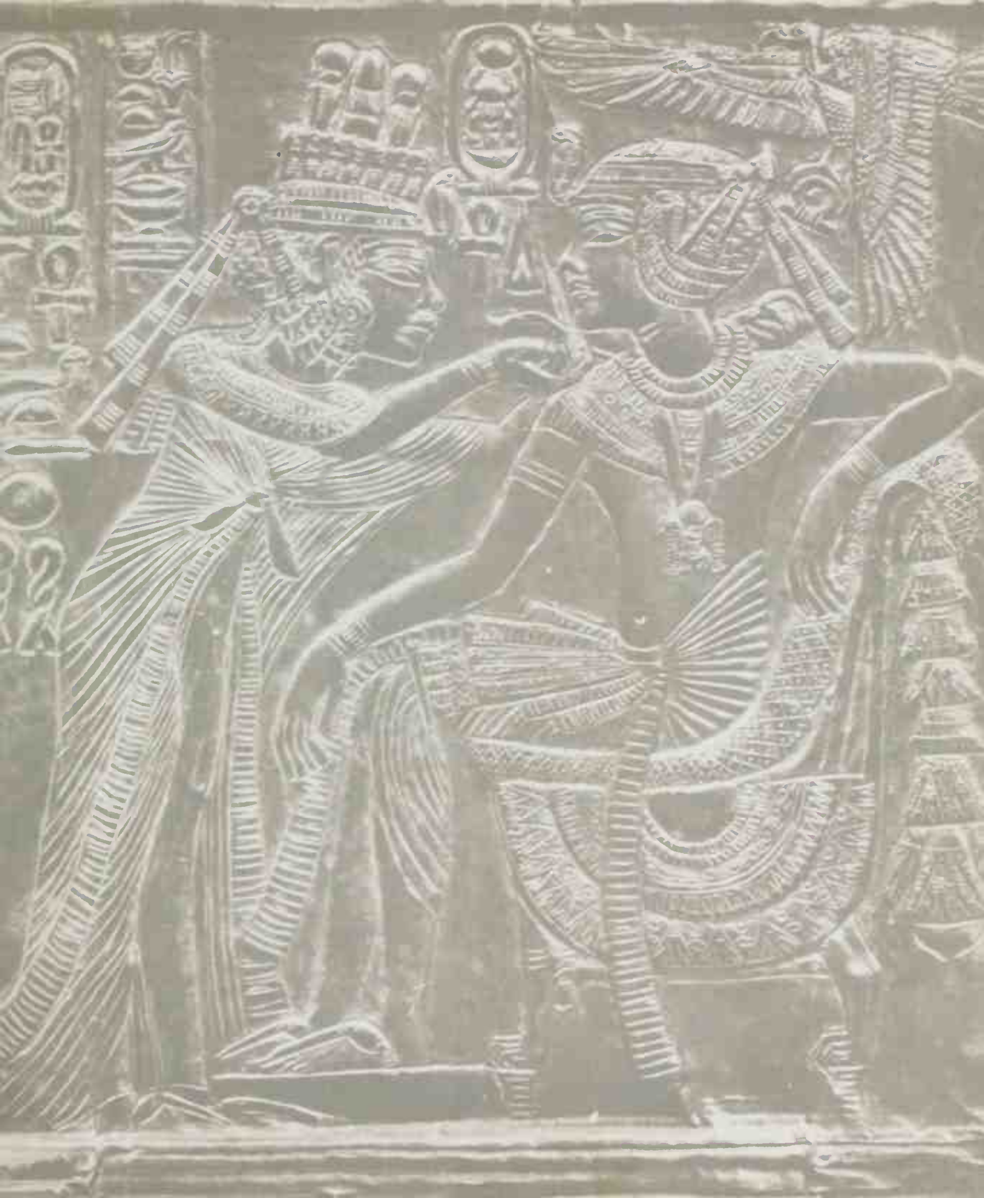

PANORAMA OF WORLD ART

Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture of

ANCIENT EGYPT

$7.95 HNN 71JI

Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture of

ANCIENT EGYPT

Text by WOLFHART WESTENDORF

HARRY N. ABRAMS, INC. Publishers NEW YORK

Front end papers:

Detail of a relief on one of Tutankhamon's coffins. Wood covered with chased gold, height of the coffin 19$^5/_8$″, approximate height of the detail 6″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From his tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Back end papers:

Priest sacrificing and blind harpist. Limestone, approximate height of the detail 17$^3/_4$″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340–1330 B.C. From the tomb of Patenemhab at Saqqara. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

Translated from the German by Leonard Mins

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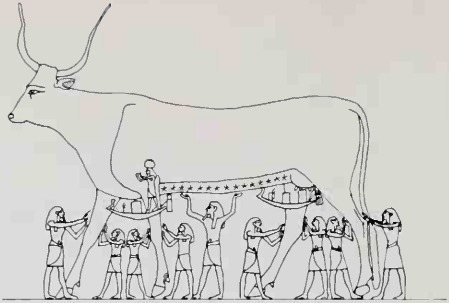
1. The sky in the form of a cow with the barks of the sun on the east and west horizons

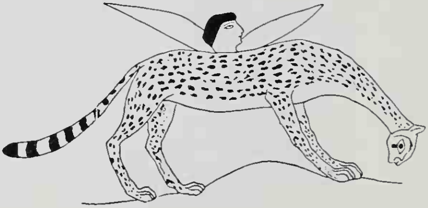


Introduction

Anyone who sets out to explore the origins of our Western civilization will come upon ancient Egypt in the course of his travels through classical Antiquity and early Christianity. And here, in ancient Egypt, he will encounter some familiar forms and concepts against whose background other, less familiar, ones stand out all the more distinctly. Besides the literature, with its echoes of Old Testament language, it is principally the art that makes this early civilization on the Nile directly accessible to us, for its expressive and harmonious forms appeal to everyone who is willing to adjust his point of view when encountering an alien culture. To understand the religion is more difficult, once we have left Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun behind us and have plunged into the thick undergrowth of its strange forms. When these are examined superficially—the dog-headed gods, for example—the entire religion can easily be misjudged. It is only the ideas concealed behind the forms that reveal the Egyptians to us as human beings who, like us though in their own ways, have tried to comprehend the divine in human terms and to clothe the unutterable in words and the unimaginable in recognizable images.

Religion was the major patron of the arts, and so, if we are to go beyond an aestheticized judgment of Egyptian art and reach a real understanding, we must learn to know the religious concepts that took form in that art. Yet, it is far from easy to describe the religion of the ancient Egyptians concisely, for many different phenomena play a part. These coexisted at the beginning of the historical period (c. 3000 B.C.) in an area extending for more than six hundred miles along the cultivated banks of the Nile, and in the course of the next three thousand years interacted and combined to produce many new forms and systems. Yet, just as the high civilization of ancient Egypt presents a consistent picture even though it comprised sedentary farmers, cattle raisers, and hunting nomads, so its religion seems to rest on unified concepts, with the individual phenomena subordinated to these as variations on a basic theme.

Every attempt to classify the gods becomes tangled in contradictions. One can try to classify them according to the sites of their major cult centers (placing the goddess Neith in Saïs, for example). But, contrasted to these "local" gods, there are the cosmic gods—personifying heaven and earth, sun and moon, air, water, desert—who are bound to no single place. The local gods are universal divinities in



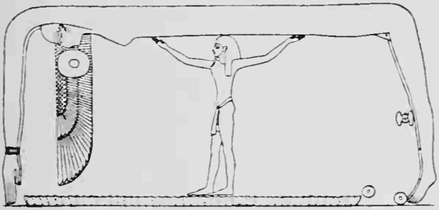
2. Hybrid god with human, hawk, and panther elements

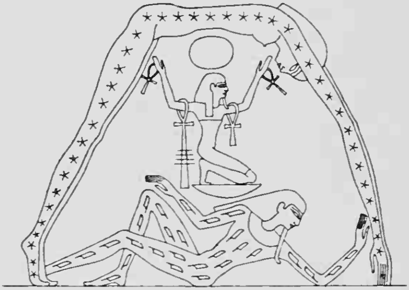
that they take care of all their worshipers' needs, while the cosmic gods rule only certain areas. Then there are "departmental" gods, who handle specific tasks (Seshat, the goddess of writing and arithmetic; Anubis, the god of the dead). Because of the tenacity with which the Egyptians held onto the traditions which were handed down to them, it is impractical to try to classify the gods chronologically. Still, one can assign the panther-goddess Mafdet to the Early period, Amon-Ra, king of the gods, to the New Kingdom, and Serapis, the hybrid Egyptian-Ptolemaic god, to the Greco-Roman period (provided we disregard the question of the forms in which these gods appeared in periods other than those assigned to them).

Lastly, if we try to classify them according to their physical forms, we can divide them into categories of gods in human, animal, plant, and fetish form. Yet the hybrid figures (a human body with an animal head, a tree with the upper part of the human body) prove that the gods cannot be given fixed and absolute forms, but manifested themselves in many different ways. What is common to all the gods, however, is that they were not only objects of faith and worship for the Egyptian, but "realities," insofar as they acted within him and for him.

The creation, maintenance, and continuation of life beyond death, in the cosmos as well as on earth, are central to the religion of ancient Egypt. This central idea is depicted in numerous mythological pictures, but these should be regarded as variants. After creation, which is to be understood as a "first time" act, the vital force of all creatures has to be preserved for eternity, this being accomplished by continuous renewal or rejuvenation. For the individual, death is chiefly a new beginning and a preparation for the next cycle, rather than the end of the previous one. This concept is most clearly evident in the case of the sun, which was probably one of the chief divinities of the country from the earliest times. At dawn, the goddess of the sky gives birth to the sun who, after completing his circular orbit, returns to his mother, is incorporated in her (by swallowing up or some other kind of physical fusion), and prepares within her womb for his next birth (fig. 1). Thus, the continuation of "eternal life" is assigned to the interaction of two elements: a mother figure who gives birth and conceives, and a son or father figure, who is born and generates new life (his own) by returning to his mother's womb. "Eternity" results from the periodic fusion of both elements, and "eternity," in Old Egyptian, is made up of two words: a feminine one meaning unending duration, static space, chaotic night, and a masculine one meaning periodic return, dynamic passage of time, and formative light.

3a. Left: the sky-goddess Nut swallowing up the setting sun
3b. Right: the sky-goddess Nut above the earth-god Geb; between them, Shu, the god of air and light



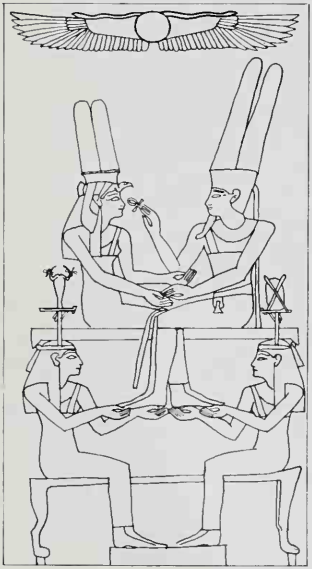


The Egyptians coined the term *kamutef*, which literally means "his mother's steer," for the combination of these phenomena. The son procreates himself with his mother in an endless chain of rejuvenations, thus becoming his own father. This division of the male element into its father and son aspects (both being identical, merely covering different stages of the cycle) is intended to make the continuous change, that is, pulsating life, strikingly clear. The transition from son to father takes place in the cycle through the passage of time, while the transformation of father into son can only be effected through the mediation of the mother.

This same striving for condensation created the hybrid figure of the "flying panther" (fig. 2) out of the mythological images of heaven (the panther) and the sun (the hawk in the morning as the son, and the man in the evening as the father). Although this monster was not retained in official art, being changed into the emblem of the "flying disk of the sun" (see page 85), the original hybrid form was preserved in the so-called *wedjat*-eye (see page 208). This eye, which became a favorite symbol of the continuous renewal of light and life, consists of the human eye of the sun-god (the father), the eyelids of the hawk (the son), and the curved arc of the eye in the predatory cats (the mother), so that it contains the three elements of the oldest "trinity."

Another way of combining the three separate elements into a whole is the forming of triads, that is, families of gods. Thus, in Thebes (see page 103) the sun-god Amon-Ra resides with Mut, the goddess of heaven. Their son, as the hawk-headed moon-god Khonsu, represents his father during the night. The Memphis triad consists of the primeval god Ptah (see page 167), the lioness Sekhmet as the goddess of heaven (see page 109), and her son Nefertem, who represents the morning sun as the "God on the Lotus Flower."

The Nut and Ra couple likewise was complemented to form a three-member family. Nut, the sky-goddess in human form (who is bent over the earth as a quadruped, like her animal-shaped predecessor), gives birth to the sun-god in the morning and swallows him (with the other stars) in the evening (fig. 3a). The cycle would really be a perfect one, for re-entry into the womb effects reprocreation. Yet theology gave the sky-goddess another partner, the earth-god Geb, in addition to her son-husband (fig. 3b). The two concepts, that the sun reappears either from the womb of the sky-goddess or from the underworld (see pages 142, 177), are combined in these parents. Both parents are merely variants of the same theme; both serve as the transitional body for the sun's nocturnal rejuvenation. The god situated between heaven and earth is Shu, the god of air and light. He ought really to play the role of the son, for his birth separated heaven and earth, which had previously been united in marriage. However, the theological system of Heliopolis placed Shu in an earlier generation, making him the father of Geb and Nut (earth and heaven). In Heliopolis, a triad of gods again presides over the local "ennead": Atum, a primeval creator-god merged with the sun-god Ra into Ra-Atum, creates the first sexually differentiated pair, Shu and Tefnet, by autogamy. Here in Heliopolis, the seat of the sun-god Ra, who had risen to become the lord of the world in the Old Kingdom (Fifth Dynasty), we meet a god who is not descended from two parents or from a mother-consort, but who has "arisen out of himself." This god initiated creation by bringing forth the first couple out of his masculine-feminine properties as a primal god. He turned the natural sequence upside down, creating a dyad out of one. Yet the impression conveyed by this great doc-



4. The "sacred marriage" of the god Amon-Ra with the queen, who is shown in the role of the goddess of heaven, Mut

trine of creation is that it developed from a deliberate inversion of a triangle. At any rate, the elements of the trinity already mentioned—Atum and Shu as the father-and-son aspects of the sun-god, and Tefnet as the mistress of heaven—subsequently preside over the ennead. Shu and Tefnet procreate Geb and Nut, with the latter two procreating the siblings Isis and Osiris, as well as Nephthys and Seth. In the Amarna period, the Heliopolis doctrine of creation once again prevails, but now the sun-god not only has no other gods preceding him, but none following him, for his son Shu is identical with King Akhenaten (see page 138).

The triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus has become the most important one. Isis is the throne-goddess, as her name implies; but this throne is merely a manifestation of the divinity of the sky (see pages 40–41). The king was "in heaven," as it were, when he ruled from his throne or sat in judgment (the dead on their lion biers were likewise "in heaven"). Osiris, the consort and brother of Isis, is the "Seat of the Eye" according to the meaning of his name. He, too, was originally a divinity who functioned as the bearer of the sun's eye—in other words, his province was the rejuvenation and rebirth of the sun. The king linked his own mortal fate with that of the sun, and in death he merged with this divinity of the "sun's seat," to arise from it rejuvenated. The young sun appears at the eastern horizon as Horus; the new Pharaoh ascends the throne as Horus, son of Osiris. Actually, perpetuation of the life cycle would be ensured by the pair of Osiris and Horus (or Isis and Horus), for both Osiris and Isis are intermediate, rejuvenating stations for Horus. Yet they combined the two variants of this same function into one pair (as in the case of Geb and Nut); this was easier to accomplish, because the "sun's-seat" divinity had been given a definitive stamp by its fusion with the dead king and had assumed the shape of the lord of the dead. Osiris now confronts the goddess Isis as "father" (instead of "mother"). As in the case of Geb and Nut, assignment to earth and heaven is fixed: the underworld belongs to Osiris, while Isis retains heaven. The return of the dead king to the womb now occurs apparently through Osiris: in death the Horus-king becomes Osiris, and only as a dead man does he procreate his new Horus form with Isis. What was a contradiction in the case of Geb and Nut, according to our way of thinking (but not according to that of the Egyptians), namely, the nocturnal voyage of the sun either through the underworld or through the inner depths of the sky, is doubly so in the case of Osiris and Isis: now the dead man passes through the bodies of both gods before he is reborn.

The perpetual course of cyclic phenomena as the basic model of life is encountered not only in the case of the sun and the other stars: it occurs also in the flooding and drying up of the Nile, in the springing up and dying away of vegetation, and in the sequence of the successive kings (who are mystically united, however, in the figure of Osiris). In the human domain, we meet the prime concerns of religious thinking: birth and death, descent from the divine and the return thereto. The orderly sequence of all these cycles is the province of the goddess Maat, who, as ruler of the sun, takes care of the life and death of the king and the people. Her name is so rich in content, embracing the concepts of order, truth, and justice, that it is ordinarily left untranslated.

The king, mediator between heaven and earth, part of both spheres, is the guarantor of the divine order on earth. Dogma states that he is the offspring of a "sacred marriage" of the king with a goddess, or of a god with the queen (fig. 4). The king, as head of the state religion, shared responsibility for the daily sunrise, for the return of the annual Nile flood, for the fertility of the soil, the provision of the necessities of life for the people, and for the prosperity of the country. He sacrificed to the gods on behalf of the country, and from their hands he received their blessing for the land of Egypt (for Egypt's gods were Egyptians and had cognizance only of Egypt, at least until the country emerged from its geographically induced isolation).

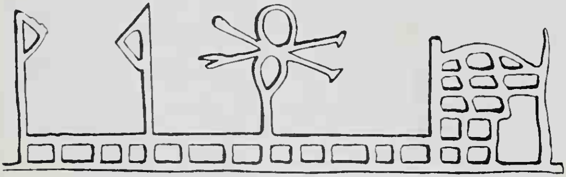
The place where the king met the gods was the temple, the earthly seat of the gods. As a protection against earthly influences, these temples were built as gigantic stone fortresses, surrounded by high walls and protected by a huge entrance gate. The defensive strength of this mighty fortress was reinforced by representations of the king on the outer walls, destroying evil in the shape of his enemies or of wild beasts. The interior walls and the halls showed the king in converse with the gods, and also scenes of worship and of festivals. The images of the gods stood within the sanctuary and in the chapels of the guest gods, and served as the bodies, made of costly material, within which the gods could come to earth. Thus, it was not the man-made image that was worshiped, but rather the divinity periodically residing within it and enduing the material with life.

During his lifetime, the king was divine because of his lineage, while in death he became a god by the power of ritual. In the interment rites he returned to his primordial state, merging with this to become Osiris. Embalmed, as the mummified figure of Osiris, the king lay in his tomb and continued to act for the prosperity of his people. As a residence for eternity, the royal tomb was built of stone or hewn out of rock. A cult temple in front of the tomb provided for the dead king, who lived on here in the form of his statue (see page 96) and received the offerings. In addition to daily food, the tomb was equipped with household goods, utensils, weapons, and jewelry.

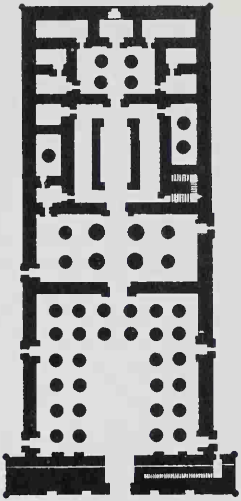
Temple and royal tomb—the abodes of the gods and of the deified kings—called on architecture, relief art, painting, sculpture, and craftsmanship to produce their highest achievements. Art became the means of molding ideas into valid and functional shapes. Certainly, the fact that the best artists and artisans worked for the gods and the kings, using the costliest and most enduring materials, benefited these works of art, but it was their link with the divine order *(maat)*, embracing all domains of life, that determined the specifically Egyptian content of their works and made them unmistakable achievements of the advanced civilization of ancient Egypt.

Like most of the manifestations of Egyptian civilization, the forms of buildings and their structural details bear the distinct marks of their antecedents through three thousand years of Pharaonic history. First of all there were the building materials, Nile mud and plant products, both derived from the soil. Rectangular houses with sloping walls were built of sun-dried bricks, and later, after the unification of the kingdom, also of molded bricks, with roofs made of palm branches laid side by side. Stripped tree trunks were used as poles to support tentlike structures, whose walls were made of hanging matting. Walls of rush or reed wattling could be reinforced with a covering of clay. Conversely, bundles of reeds at the edges might be used to prevent damage to the adobe bricks.

After the transition to stone construction, which transformed the entire Zoser complex to stone during the Third Dynasty (see page 29), these prehistoric structural elements continue to appear as essential features of Pharaonic architecture. Today we find imitations of the old reed, matting, and adobe types of construction reproduced—sometimes quite inappropriately—in limestone, sandstone, or granite. The former bundles of reeds have become decorative edgings at the corners of walls and have been given the pretty, though inaccurate, name of "Doric half columns." We encounter the sloping walls in the entrance pylons of the temple (see page 165). To crown the building, there is the hollow molding, a curved structural member that derives from the palm branches that were fixed to the adobe walls (as is still done in Egypt today). Originally, however, the deeper meaning of this crown of palm branches is to be sought in the religious significance of the buildings: temples, palaces, and royal tombs were imitations of the cosmic structure or of its component parts. The king was also to be "in heaven" during his earthly existence, which is why the prehistoric royal tent was given the



5. Protohistoric shrine of Neith, whose emblem stands in the middle of the court

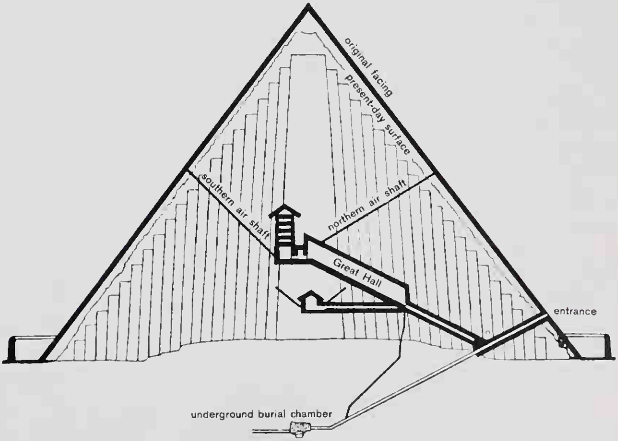


6. Plan of the temple of Khonsu in Karnak

shape of an animal that was the embodiment of heaven, and why the sacred buildings were given a crown of palms—for in another conception, heaven could be a palm in whose spreading crown the sun-god appeared (the sun-disk in the hollow molding retained this link down to the end of the Pharaonic period, see page 226). The columns exhibit unmistakable features of the old method of construction in wood: the marks of the carpenters who stripped the bark from the tree trunks with their adzes are still reproduced in the stone. Today these grooves are wrongly called "Protodoric." The "tent-pole column" is the former tent pole now executed in stone. The palm column is another mythologema in stone: as the pillar of heaven it supports the roof of the temple, which is covered with stars and other celestial symbols. Bundled lotus and papyrus columns are other forms of pillars of heaven. Open or closed papyrus-umbel capitals mark the path of the sun-god through the natural world (see page 103).

With few exceptions, the only temples for the gods that have survived are those of the New Kingdom and later, while the mortuary temples of the kings go back to the Old Kingdom. Even the so-called solar sanctuaries of the Fifth Dynasty, with their enormous obelisks that served as dwellings of the god Ra, were structures of the royal death cult, and their primary function was in connection with the personal "ascension" of the sovereign (worship of the king and of the gods was similarly combined in the mortuary temples of the New Kingdom, see page 180). Does this mean that the kings had precedence over the gods in the Old Kingdom? Archaeology seems to say so, and the lines of development of king and god, running in opposite directions (see page 216), would lead us to anticipate this finding. However, it must be remembered on behalf of the gods that their later temples stood on traditional ground, and that the evidence of the oldest divine worship has been obliterated by continuous rebuilding on the same site.

The elements of temple construction were already present in early historical times (fig. 5). The chapel, erected at the end of an open court, faced the entrance, which was flanked by emblems of the god. The entire complex was enclosed within a wall. Later on, an enclosing wall surrounded the temples as well (fig. 6). Behind the pylon with its flagpoles (see page



7. Cross section of the Cheops pyramid

165) there was the open colonnaded court (see pages 102–3), to which the masses had access. Beyond this and on a higher level, there was a transverse colonnaded hall, whose dividing wall might be only half the height of the columns (see page 226). The columns with open capitals along the processional way were taller, giving the hall a high nave with lower flanking aisles. With the raising of the floor to a still higher level and the falling away of the roof in steps, additional side walls narrowed the passage, clearly indicating the direction of the goal, the sanctuary. As the light grew dimmer, the way led through a room for the god's bark into this sanctuary at the far end of the temple. The side chapels were intended for the subordinate worship of the guest gods, while other rooms were used as storerooms or vestries for keeping the ritual objects.

The palaces in which the kings resided during their life have all vanished, except for a few remains. They were normally built of air-dried brick, unlike the palaces for eternity, such as the Zoser enclosure (see page 29), which were built of stone.

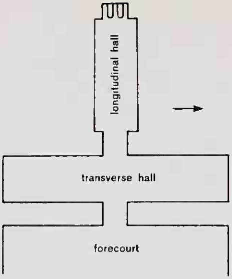
The origins of the royal tombs go far back into prehistoric times. The tomb of an Upper Egyptian chieftain probably consisted of a gigantic mound of sand that covered the dead ruler. The pyramid is the burial mound transformed into stone and given an abstract, mathematical form. The mythological source of the pyramid was the "primeval hill" projecting from the primeval water, from which, according to one doctrine of the world's origin, the sun-god first arose. Similarly, the dead king hoped to ascend to the gods from this tomb that projected upward to heaven. After the intermediate solution of the step mastaba in the Third Dynasty (see page 29), the pyramids reached their culminating perfection in the Fourth Dynasty. The largest, the pyramid of Cheops (see page 42), is described here as a model of this type of construction (fig. 7).

The pyramid rose originally to a height of 485 feet, with sides sloping at an angle of 52°. Its base, carefully leveled and oriented toward the north, is 754 feet square. The individual stone blocks were hauled up inclined ramps, layer after layer. As the pyramid grew, the ramp was extended until the stepped core (now visible once again) was complete. Then the oblique facing stones, cut from granite or fine limestone, were set in place, starting at the top, and polished until their surfaces were mirror-smooth. (The outer layers of the pyramid that are now missing, were used in the building of the nearby city of Cairo.) The entrance faces north, toward the fixed circumpolar stars, to which the dead sovereign aspired. A passageway leads down to an underground burial chamber, which, however, was not used. A second passage branches upward at ground level, opening into the so-called "Great Hall." Here, another passage runs horizontally to another burial chamber, likewise unused. Stumbling blocks were piled up in the Great Hall to secure the entrance. Two shafts lead north and south from the granite-lined sepulchral chamber to the outer edges of the pyramid. These were probably intended to supply air to the dead king and also to enable his soul, which was believed to have the form of a bird, to fly in and out. There are five hollow spaces above the burial chamber, which may have been designed to prevent the ceiling from caving in under the weight of the overlying mass of stone. Although the precision with which this gigantic structure was built is impressive, the layman is disappointed to learn that the mystical numerology imagined for this pyramid does not exist. The mortuary temple, connected to a temple in the valley (see page 46) by a covered passageway, lies east of the pyramid.

In the New Kingdom royal tombs in Thebes, the unity of tomb and temple of worship was abandoned. The mortuary temples lie on the near side of the Western Mountain of Thebes (see pages 101, 180–81, 194), while the tombs are arranged in long galleries, opening out into chambers and halls, on the other side of the range, in the Valley of the Kings (see pages 142–43, 150–53, 163, 174–79). During the Eighteenth Dynasty these tomb structures curved away toward the left, but later they were laid out as straight as reed pipes, which is why the Greeks called them "syringes."

Private tombs, which usually copied the forms of royal burial (even pyramids were built in Thebes, see page 185), did not separate the tomb from the place of worship. In the capital city of Memphis, the private tombs of

8. A typical Theban rock tomb

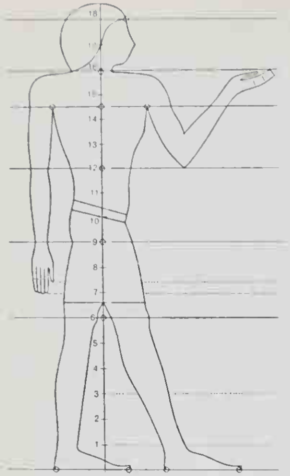


the Old Kingdom had the form of the so-called mastaba (Arabic for "bench") —a rectangular superstructure, sloping on all four sides, made of brick or limestone and about sixty-five feet long (see page 44). This form goes back to the prehistoric burial mound, and it finally evolved, through the step mastaba (see page 29), into the pyramid. The superstructure is provided with rooms, passages, and niches as a dwelling for the dead. The dead man himself rested deep beneath the mastaba in a sepulchral chamber, to which a vertical shaft led down from the superstructure. After the interment, this shaft was walled up and covered over with rubble; thereafter the corpse was part of the underworld. However, the dead man lived on in the mastaba's superstructure in the shape of his statue in its own inaccessible statue chamber (called *serdab* from the Arabic word for a cellar). The *serdab* was situated directly behind the offerings chamber, sometimes behind the "false door" (see pages 64–65). Incense from the offerings room could reach the statue through a slit; and the dead man, coming from the west, was able to pass through the false door and mingle with the living to receive their gifts.

When the political center of the country shifted from Memphis in Lower Egypt to Upper Egyptian Thebes, the rock tomb became the prevailing form for kings and commoners. The rock tombs of the nomarchs in Middle and Upper Egypt constituted an intermediate form, chronologically and geographically. The private rock tomb at Thebes is known in its canonical form ever since the Eleventh Dynasty, though it is only in the tombs of the New Kingdom that it has become famous. It was entered from a forecourt open to the east, which was cut into the cliff in such a way that its rear wall constituted the outer wall of the tomb. A central door opened on a transverse hall (sometimes supported by pillars), which connected with a longitudinal hall (fig. 8). The sequence of forecourt, transverse hall, and longitudinal hall recalls the ground plan of the temple (fig. 6). The sepulchral chamber was set deep inside the rock, inaccessible to visitors to the tomb. As in the mastaba, the dead man is represented by a statue erected in the *serdab*, which is now sometimes open and transformed into a niche. The false door is retained, though now it is often merely painted on the plastered wall. Thus, the three elements of the mastaba (place of worship, *serdab*, and sepulchral chamber) are still present. The members of the family, both living and dead, continue to gather in the tomb. The walls are still covered with pictures whose function is to ensure eternal life for the deceased.

These representations in the tombs of the ancient Egyptians tell us much more about their lives than any other sources. Over and above their importance as sources for the history of civilization, however, the relief cycles of the mastabas and the paintings in the Thebes tombs are the highest achievements of two-dimensional Egyptian art—which includes painting, relief, and hieroglyphic script. Hieroglyphs are quite as important artistically as painted or carved representations, for they can always function as pictures, just as the picture can, conversely, be read as a written character.

The laws of two-dimensional Egyptian art sometimes give rise to the notion that the figures are rigid or strangely distorted. But we soon learn to see this different mode of representation in its true light; for in their two-dimensional art, the Egyptians did not depict the world as the eye sees it, that is, with perspective foreshortening and overlapping, but as it actually is. Thus, if a ring was to be shown in a dish, it was shown upright and circular above the edge of the dish. A god drawn on the outer wall of a chapel was understood as being within the chapel: he was there whether one's eye saw him or not. In contrast to perspective drawing, which depends on the point of view, ancient Egyptian art depicted an object in such a way that all the individual



9. The canon of proportions

features that were considered to be important were united, with each component viewed straight on. Thus, a ring, for example, is always shown as a circle and never as an ellipse. All people who do not employ the perspective introduced by the Greeks in the sixth century B. C. draw as the Egyptians did. Children draw in somewhat the same manner when they attach four circles to a rectangle: because they know from experience that a wagon has four wheels, and because they rightly consider it essential that these wheels be circular, they therefore paint them as circles. Modern art reapproaches this mode of representation when it reproduces the essential rather than the visible.

The selection of the essential component features would lead to another kind of subjective evaluation of objects, if it were not for the fact that the genesis of two-dimensional art in ancient Egypt was paralleled by the development of a standardizing arrangement which established an obligatory canon.

Which of the various possible approaches finally prevailed can be seen most vividly in the portrayal of people (fig. 9). The head is shown in profile, but the eye in front view; the upper part of the body is seen from the front, so that both arms have complete freedom of action; the nipple and the navel are situated on the frontal profile line; the lower part of the body, to which the legs are attached, is again shown in profile. As a rule, the human figure is shown facing toward the right (as in the hieroglyphs); accordingly, the left leg is placed forward—much farther forward for a man than for a woman. The right arm can move freely and far to the rear (see page 24), an arrangement that is apparently reversed in symmetrical confrontations (see page 169). Coordinate axes or square grids (sometimes still preserved) fixed distances and the position of the components within the framework of the whole as aids for the rough sketch, and established proportions that were universally valid. Here too, *maat*, whose province included order and truth and reality, operated: only compliance with the fixed order guaranteed that the depicted figure would be "real" and thus would satisfy the claim of being an "efficacious" image. This canon applied primarily to kings, gods, and persons of eminence; substantial deviations from the norm were permissible in the case of servants, artisans, and prisoners, to enable the portrayal of characteristic traits. Another standard adapted the size of the persons to their social status: the king would thus be shown larger than his servants (see page 25).

Colors, the range of which was confined to a few primary colors, were likewise governed by an ideal conception, and were not subject to the changing play of light and shadow. Different colors were used for a man's skin (brown) and for that of a woman (yellow). Red (indicating Seth, the god of evil) and black (death and resurrection) had symbolic meanings. Gold was the symbol of the sun and its perpetually recurring vital force. Mineral colors were employed: ocher for red, yellow, and brown; malachite for green; azurite for blue; gypsum or chalk for white; and charcoal or soot for black. Oxidized copper sometimes served as a substitute material for blue and green. Glue, white of egg, and gum arabic were used as binders. As a rule, the colors were applied in direct juxtaposition; in other words, the independence of the separate components was usually retained. Whole units were outlined in dark lines.

Painting is manifestly older than relief. Once relief sculpture had been introduced, color served either as a supplementary adjunct (see page 55) or as a complete substitute wherever no solid background was available for work with the chisel—as, above all, in the Theban tombs (see pages 114–31, 186–91).

The technique of relief sculpture has its origins in the Prehistoric period, shortly before the unification of the kingdom, beginning with such perfect creations as the cosmetic palettes (see pages 17–19, 24–25). With all its modeling, high relief is never wholly detached from its background: its principles are those of two-dimensional painting rather than of sculpture in the round. Intaglio appears in the Fourth Dynasty. Here, the empty space around the figures (the background) is left unworked. Outlines run like ditches around the figures, which are as fully modeled as in high relief. In addition to the saving in time, the intaglio technique affords more protection to the relief, and it was therefore widely used on exterior walls. This technique was preferred, above all, for hieroglyphs, elaboration of the interior drawing being dispensed with (see page 71).

Temples and tombs are architectural renderings of places of existence, whether the entire universe (as in the temple), or only a part of it (for example, the underworld in the royal tombs of the New Kingdom), or even simply the earthly palace or dwelling carried over into eternity. Their walls are covered with scenes in relief or painting, which are usually directly related to the functions of the different rooms. Worship of the gods is depicted: the great festivals for the gods, the receiving of offerings, and the bestowal of blessings. Interment and the cult of the dead are reproduced, as well as provision for the dead in the hereafter (the constantly filled dining table, the list of offerings, the offering prayer, the employment of every power of the death cult to provide food and household utensils for the dead). Historical events of special personal significance for the deceased alternate with pictures of life in the hereafter: the dead man becomes part of the world of the gods; he appears before Osiris, the judge of the dead, and finally attains the "Fields of the Blessed."

Yet, in spite of the wall paintings, the temples and tombs would have been mere empty spaces if the principal character were not also physically present. The god, the king, or the lord of the tomb is represented by statuary, in which he has a bodily and independent existence.

The origins of sculpture (like those of painting) lie far back in the Prehistoric period. The sculpture of the Pharaonic period is governed by the same laws that apply to two-dimensional art. Once again, it is the essential, the universally valid, that is to be preserved, rather than the fleeting and changeable appearance of the moment. In spite of all the individuality of the subject (identified by the inscription or attribute), we must not expect a realistic portrait showing every unessential detail. Sculpture is governed by the same principles as two-dimensional art. The components are carved in straight-on view from the sides of the original block of stone, so that they are essentially at right angles to one another. That is why we speak of the statues' "blocklike" appearance. Their construction according to an unvarying system sometimes earns them the pejorative labels "stiff" or "monotonous." Their piecing together of the whole from separate elements (the "hieroglyphic conception" of H. W. Müller) is particularly prominent at the beginning of each major epoch.

A number of different types emerged, which became obligatory and almost unvarying. These included the standing figure (with left leg forward, as in two-dimensional art); the seated (usually with hand outstretched to receive offerings); the "cloaked statue" and "block statue"; youths and those bearing the marks of age. The portrait heads (see page 48) and the busts (see page 39) are truncated forms of the tomb statue. Particularly important activities or characteristics are shown in the figures of scribes, servants, and bearers of offerings. The statues of gods bear the stamp of the respective divine figure: human, animal, or hybrid. The king may also be depicted in his animal manifestations or as a sphinx. Only secondarily are the individual persons of a group combined into unities: god and king, divine triad, married couple, or family.

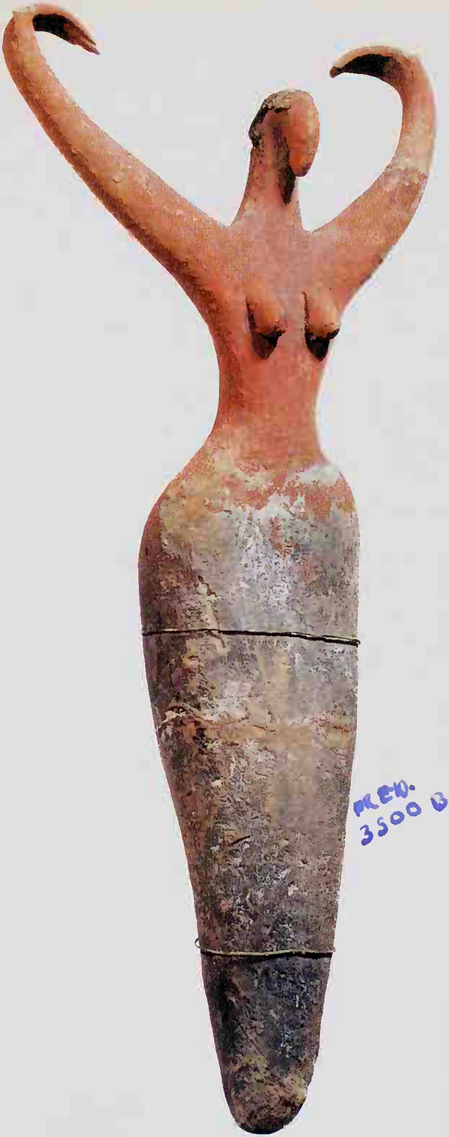
The materials most often employed were the hard rocks (granite, diorite, quartzite, graywacke), since the portrayal was intended to last for all time; but alabaster and limestone were also used, as well as wood and metal (the latter from the end of the Old Kingdom). The colors, or traces of them, have been preserved in most of the stone or wooden statues. In the case of many pieces found without color, it is uncertain whether or not they were originally painted: sometimes the natural color of the material took the place of paint. The eyes were frequently inlaid with rock crystal or quartz.

Once they were completed, the statues were brought to life by the ceremony of "opening the mouth," so that they could step out freely from their timeless state into life, that is, into the course of time. It has been said that ancient Egyptian sculpture conquered death by largely overcoming time and space (it being asserted that space was overcome by reducing everything to two-dimensional surfaces). Yet, did the ancient Egyptians really wish to overcome time and space in order to conquer death and attain eternity? Let us complete the circle by recalling the idea of the two eternities mentioned at the beginning of this essay: the feminine and static, corresponding to space, and the masculine, cyclical, and dynamic, associated with the passage of time. Thus, spatial eternity has neither beginning nor end, while temporal eternity runs its circular course without spatial limitation. Only when the two eternities meet, when the masculine unites with the feminine, do they penetrate both time and space. Space, which has been static and sterile until then, conceives and gives birth, and through this change it is subjected to the influence of time. The starting and finishing point of the circular motion, set by the maternal space, is the sole limitation of the otherwise free-flowing time element. If the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians held that death is conquered and life is preserved only by the periodic union of the two eternities, we cannot expect sculpture to endeavor to overcome time and space. On the contrary, timeless space must be linked to spaceless time to ensure everlasting life. To achieve this, sculpture must be as much "body" as is spatial eternity, which does not bear the name "body" for nothing. Sculpture must not be allowed to overcome its spatiality, for, according to the ancient Egyptian belief, it is only out of this grammatically feminine "space" that new life is born. Hence, space and time would be equally represented in the statue, with space as the prerequisite for the potentially inherent time. In its timeless form, the statue is the space from which the enclosed person can emerge periodically for physical activity—that is, for life—and to which he can return in due course for further rejuvenation. Only by entering into time does the statue attain complete life, however, proving that it can overcome death. And this is precisely the demand that the cult of the dead makes of the statue, and of art as a whole.

Lastly, in a book that deals with ancient Egyptian art, we should not omit to mention the artists who created the wonderful works with which we are concerned. This recognition must be a collective one, however, for they usually remained anonymous. Even the occupation of "artist" did not exist as yet, at least not in the sense in which we use the term today. The ancient Egyptian word for "art" also, and originally, meant "craft," indicating, first of all, the ability to bore out stone vessels. Thus, the activity of the "artist" was a handicraft in the best sense of the term, and there was hardly any scope for him to develop into the present-day artist. Commissions were rigidly outlined, motifs fixed by custom and tradition, and execution hemmed in by the canon. Thus, several artists might be working on the same commission independently of one another, rendering any "personal" relationship to the finished work difficult. In spite of their social status as artisans, however, artists occupied a special position, which is reflected in the sculptor's designation as "preserver of life." It was largely owing to these artists that the ancient Egyptians who employed them achieved their goal of surviving death, continuing to live in the memory of posterity from one eternity to the next.

PREHISTORIC PERIOD
(fourth millennium B.C.)

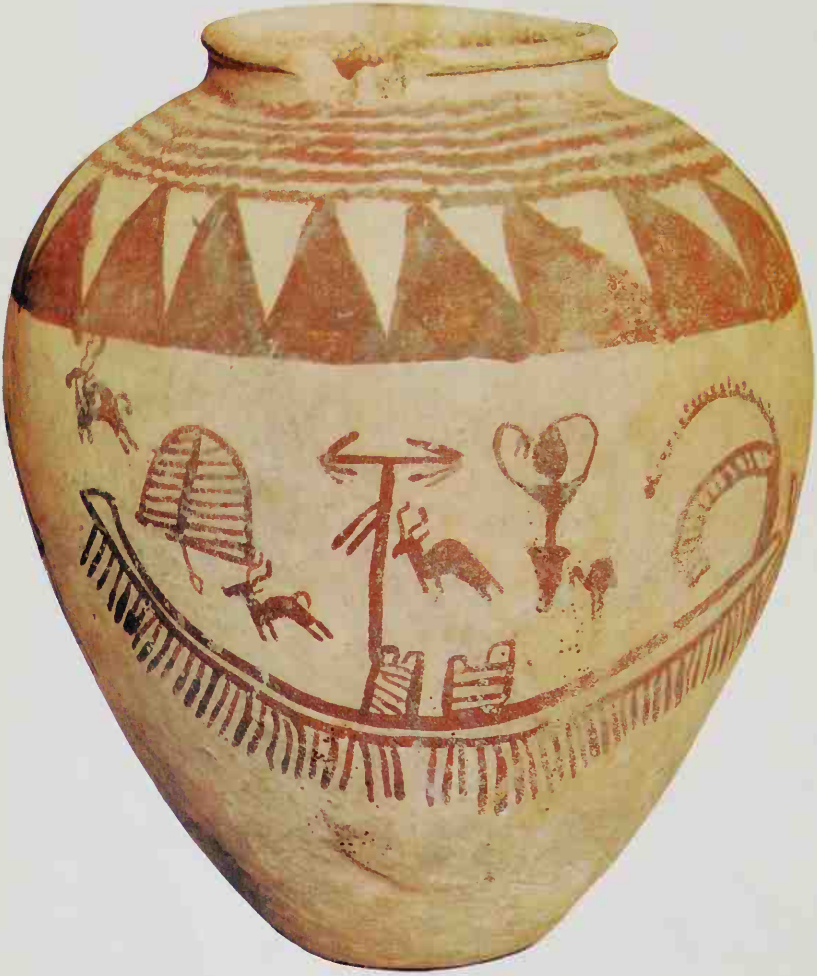
The numerous statuettes of the Nagadah I culture, molded in clay or carved in bone, include the first human portraits in the round, in addition to many figures of animals. What is remarkable is the predominance of female figures with clearly emphasized sexual characteristics. The figure from Mamariya has its upraised arms bent inward toward the head, a posture that is repeated in the motifs of vase painting in this period and the succeeding one. The wide diffusion of this motif is evidence of the symbolic nature of this unusual posture. Its interpretation as a "dance" is not wholly satisfactory, but rather raises the question of what this dance attitude is supposed to express. Is it an act of human homage to a divinity? Or is it the goddess herself, a "Great Mother," lifting her arms up to heaven? Or are the arms supposed to imitate the cow's horns of the sky-goddess (cf. pages 24, 25)?



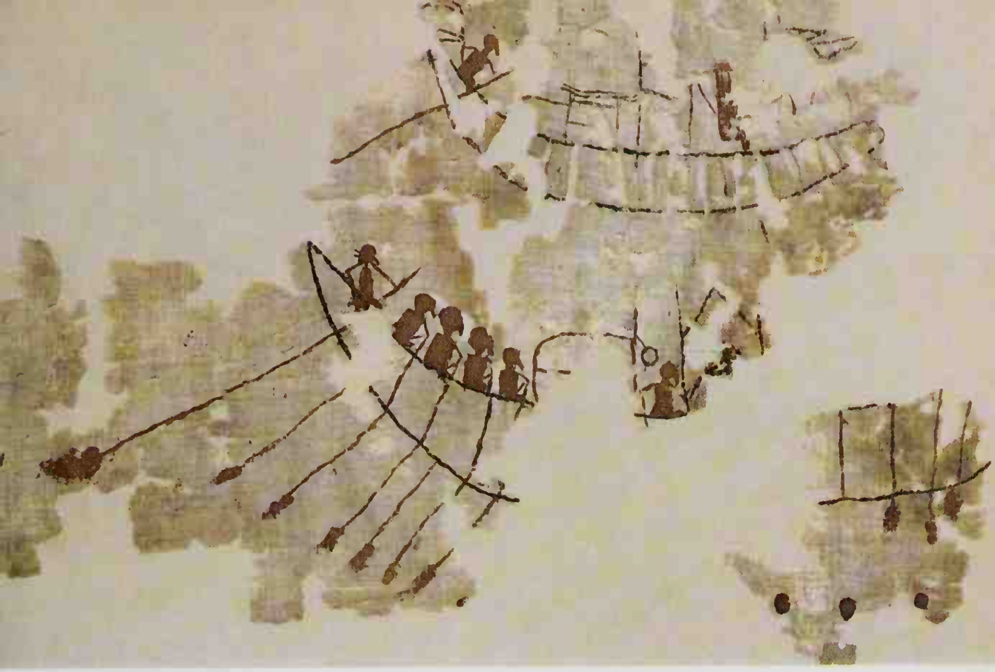
PREH.
3500 BC

Female figure. Painted clay, height $11^{3}/_{8}''$. Nagadah I culture, mid-fourth millennium B.C. From Mamariya. Brooklyn Museum, New York

Vase painted in a reddish brown on a light ground. Clay, height $9^1/_2$″. Nagadah II culture, end of fourth millennium B.C. State Museums, Berlin (East)

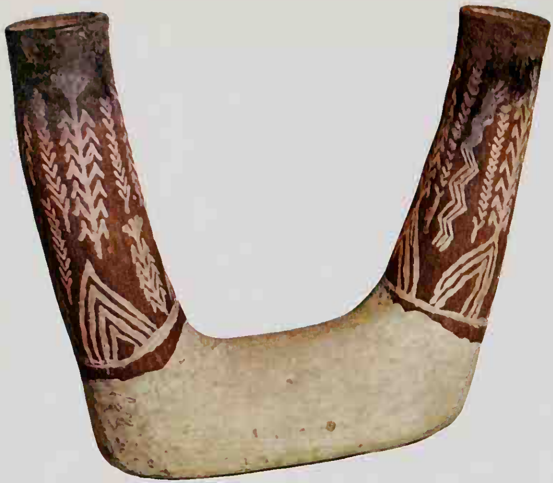


PRE-D. 4000 BC.



Galleys. Painted linen, detail c. 35³/₈ × 23⁵/₈". Nagadah II culture, second half of fourth millennium B.C. From a grave near Gebelein. Egyptian Museum, Turin

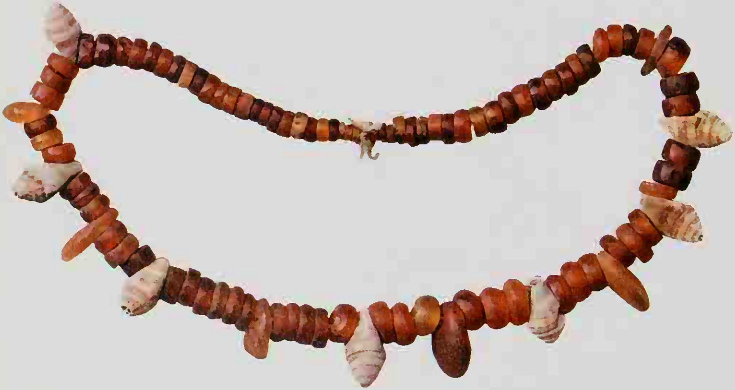
◀ Bulging clay vases, painted in a dark red on a light ground, are the typical finds of the Nagadah II culture. The principal surfaces of the vases are filled with many-oared ships (shipping had begun on the Nile, linking up the regions along the river). The motifs of the Nagadah I culture, animals and people, are combined with the ships, but we notice that small domestic animals and waterfowl are now shown instead of wild animals, indicating the beginnings of the domestication of animals by man. Here the female figure with the upraised arms and turned-in hands (cf. page 13) stands alone, although on a contemporary vase in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, which is painted in the same manner, she is flanked by two men, much smaller in size, as if she were playing the central role. The ship is decorated with branches and a regional or divinity standard above the cabin. The triangular ornaments at the upper edge of the vase are vestiges of an earlier epoch. As a funerary offering, the vase may have contained food or ointments for life in the hereafter, and the portrayal might suggest a scene from the cult of the dead, perhaps the funerary voyage.



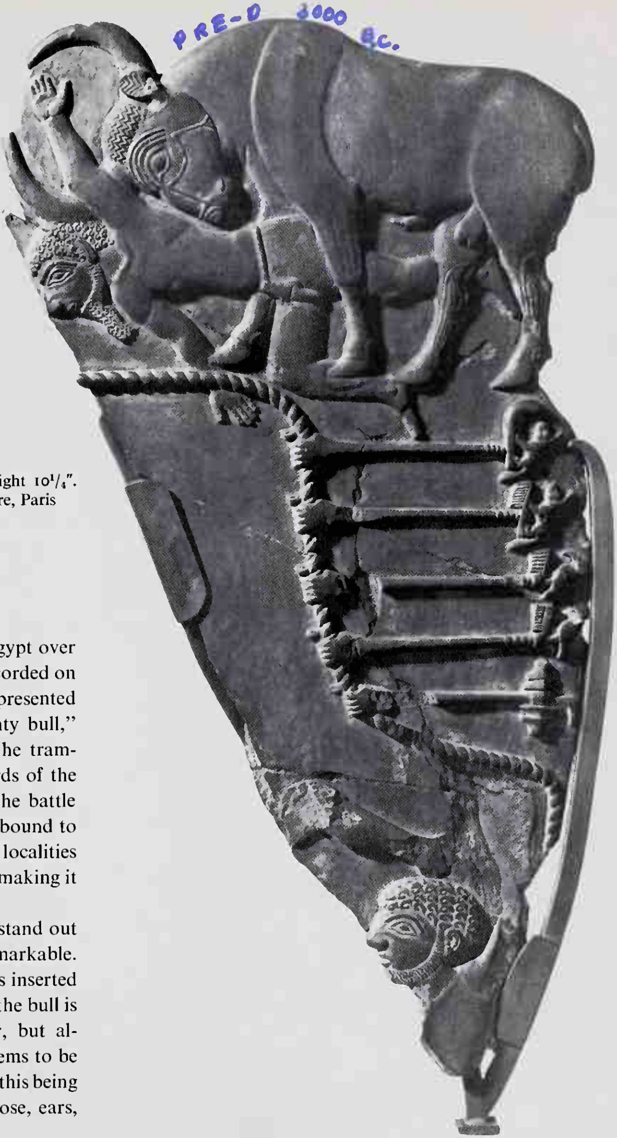
Two-necked vase. Clay, height $8^1/_4$". Nagadah I culture, c. 3500 B.C. State Collection of Egyptian Art, Munich

Contemporary with the female figure on page 13, this vase likewise has both arms raised up and is painted white on the reddish fired clay. It, too, poses a riddle, for we do not know the function of the two interconnected necks. Another moot question is whether the white-painted flowers are merely ornaments or form a meaningful part of the over-all plan.

Necklace of carnelian and shells. Prehistoric. Kestner Museum, Hanover



PREDYNASTIC PERIOD
(c. 3000 B.C.)

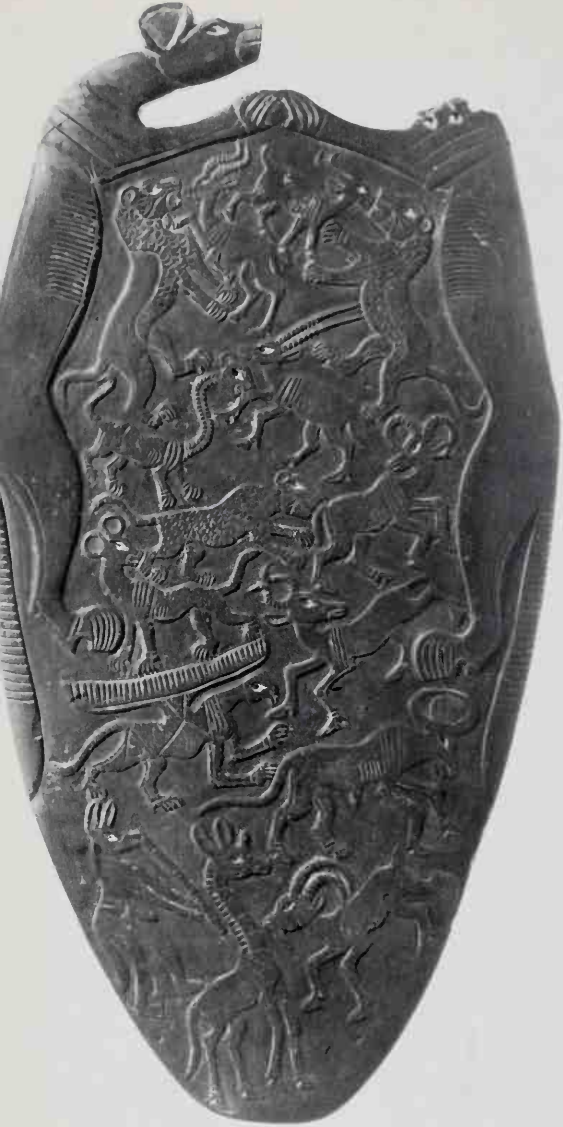


PRE-D 3000 B.C.

Fragment of a cosmetic palette. Slate, height 10¼″. Predynastic period, c. 3000 B.C. The Louvre, Paris

The victory of the King of Upper Egypt over his Lower Egyptian adversaries is recorded on a slate tablet. The king himself is represented by one of his emblems: as a "mighty bull," the name given in a later king list, he tramples on a fallen enemy. The standards of the royal guard play an active part in the battle and lead away captured adversaries bound to a rope. The names of the captured localities are listed on the back of the palette, making it a document of a historical event.

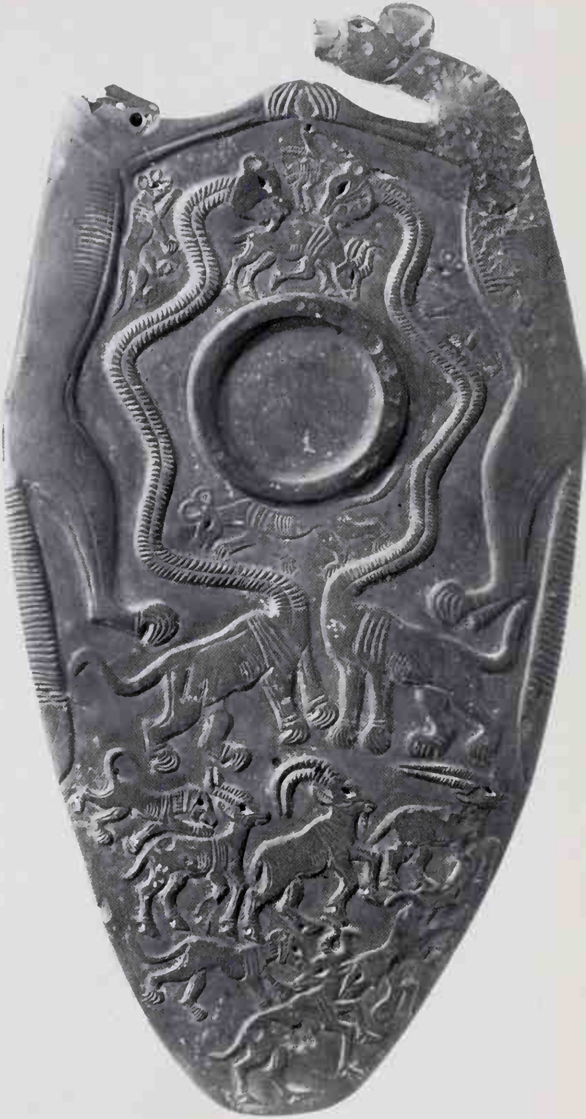
The high relief, which lets details stand out almost physically, is stylistically remarkable. The way in which the fallen enemy is inserted between, or even behind, the legs of the bull is hardly two-dimensional any longer, but almost three-dimensional. The bull seems to be assembled from its component parts, this being particularly noticeable in the eye, nose, ears, and quarters.



Cosmetic palettes were donated to temples, probably by the king himself, to be used in the worship of the statue of the god, in human or animal form or as a hybrid of the two. The god's eyes were painted, thus magically reinforcing their radiance and power of vision. The identification of a god's eye with the sun, as attested in later periods, may go back as far as the prehistoric era. Thus, painting the eyes of a god would be an act of assistance to the sun by the king and, consequently, of man's endeavor to preserve the cosmic order, the perpetual return of the sun, by ritual means.

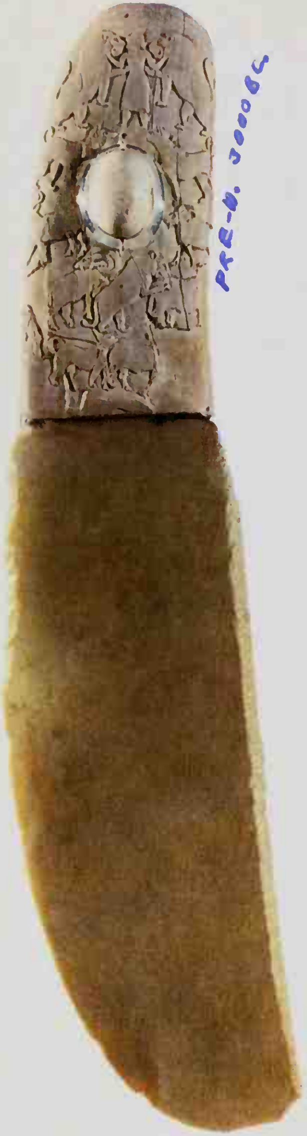
Realization that these cosmetic palettes were intended for painting the god's eye provides an interpretation of the subjects depicted that corresponds to this function. The palette shows the battle of the animal powers, the attack of the large carnivorous felines and canines on the enemies of the sun, usually represented by various species of antelope. Here the king, as the supreme religious leader, allies himself with the

Cosmetic palette with mythological subjects (obverse and reverse). Slate, height $16^7/_8$". Predynastic period, c. 3000 B.C. From the temple of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



celestial powers to preserve the eye of the sun. The hybrid mythological forms indicate that this involves more than showing how animals live in the desert: two snake-necked panthers (on the cupule side of the palette) strip off the flesh of a prostrate enemy of the sun with their rough tongues. On the other side of the palette, a griffin, as a combination of a predatory feline and a bird of prey, comes from this world of myths, as does a god (demon? magician?) with the head of an ass or jackal, who is playing a flute. The four upright hyenas constitute the four corner posts of the world; their forepaws, resting against one another, form the vault of the heavens. The sun itself, at the center of the whole, is also the cupule for paint; the cosmetics it contained were intended for the sun-eye of the god.

From an art-historical standpoint, these palettes enable us to trace the beginnings of Egyptian relief carving and to anticipate its imminent peaks of achievement.



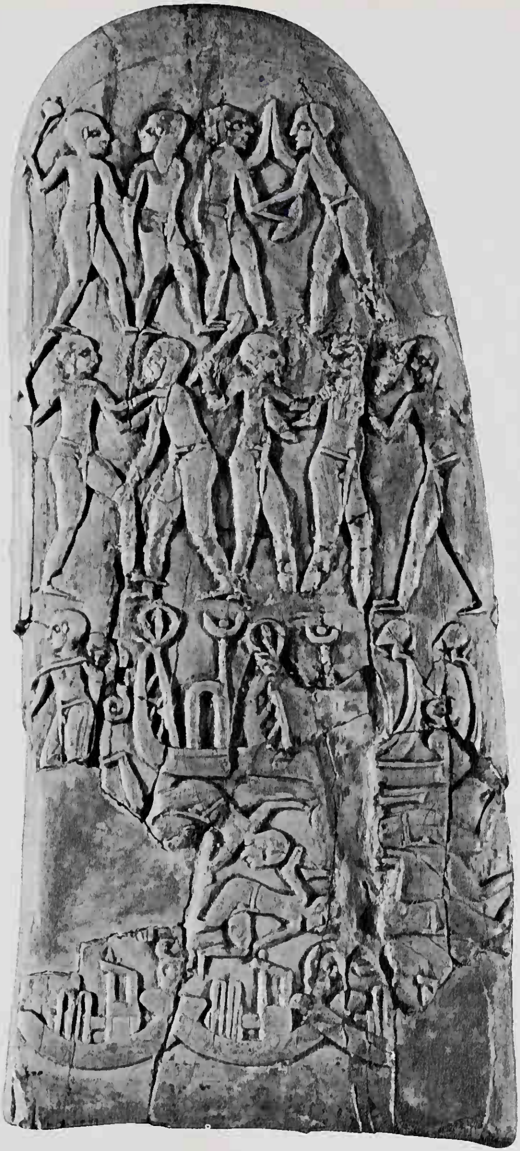
PRE-D. 3000 BC

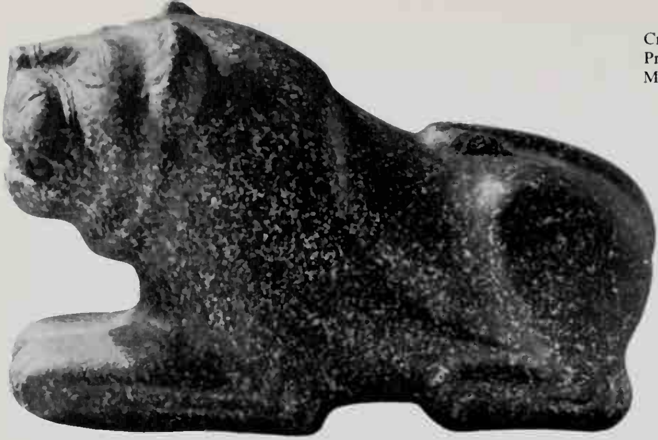
Knife. Flint, with ivory handle, length of handle 3³/₄". Predynastic period, c. 3000 B.C. From Gebel el Arak. The Louvre, Paris. Facing page: reverse side of handle

Ivory handles dating from the end of the prehistoric period are further evidence of the high stage of development of the relief style at this early date. The "lion-tamer" group dominates the boss side of the handle (a hole in the boss enabled it to be attached to a carrying cord). This confronted group, like the snake-necked panthers that also occur in pairs (pages 19, 25), is usually considered to be an import from Mesopotamia and is thought to represent the divine "Protector of the Herds." Since later Egyptian portrayals explain two lions placed facing each other as the east and west horizons that flank the sun-god or sun, a native Egyptian meaning of this group cannot be ruled out; we should consider as possible the interpretation that this is the sun-god in regal form, appearing as the lord of both horizons, which devour him and then regenerate him day after day.

The back of the handle deals with the battles of the period, as a result of which the two kingdoms were united, and in which ships played a part. It probably depicts a victory of Upper Egyptian units over Lower Egypt or Libya, and these battles were probably regarded as terrestrial counterparts of the celestial struggles shown on the boss side of the handle.

Despite the tumult of battle, the individual figures already exhibit essential features of classical Egyptian art. They do not portray mere transitory incidents in the course of battle, but embody in abstract fashion the timeless ideas of "swinging a club," "wrestling," or "lying prostrate," and are thus symbols that are almost readable as hieroglyphs and may be employed repeatedly.

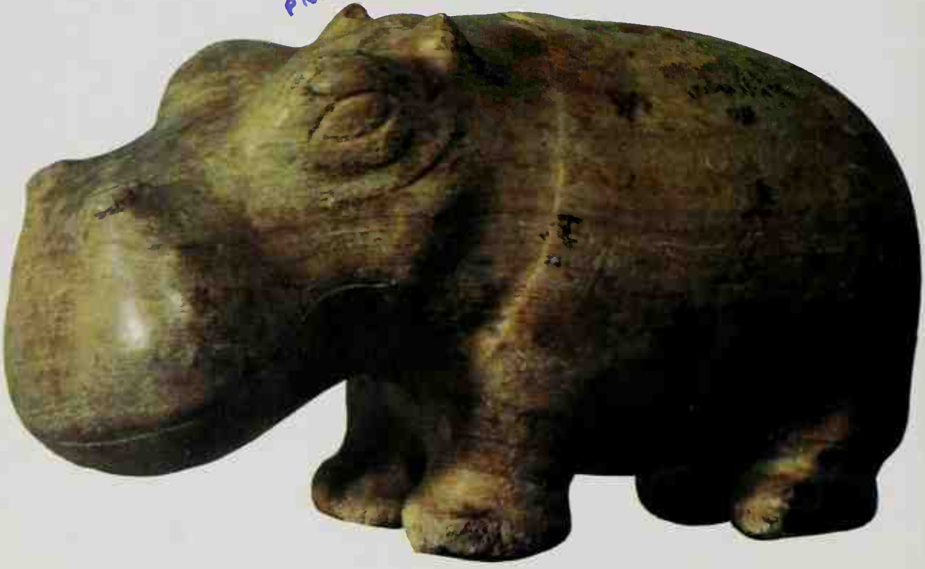




Crouching lion. Granite, length 12$^{5}/_{8}$″. Predynastic period, c. 3000 B.C. State Museums, Berlin (East)

Hippopotamus. Alabaster, length 12$^{5}/_{8}$″. Predynastic period, c. 3000 B.C. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

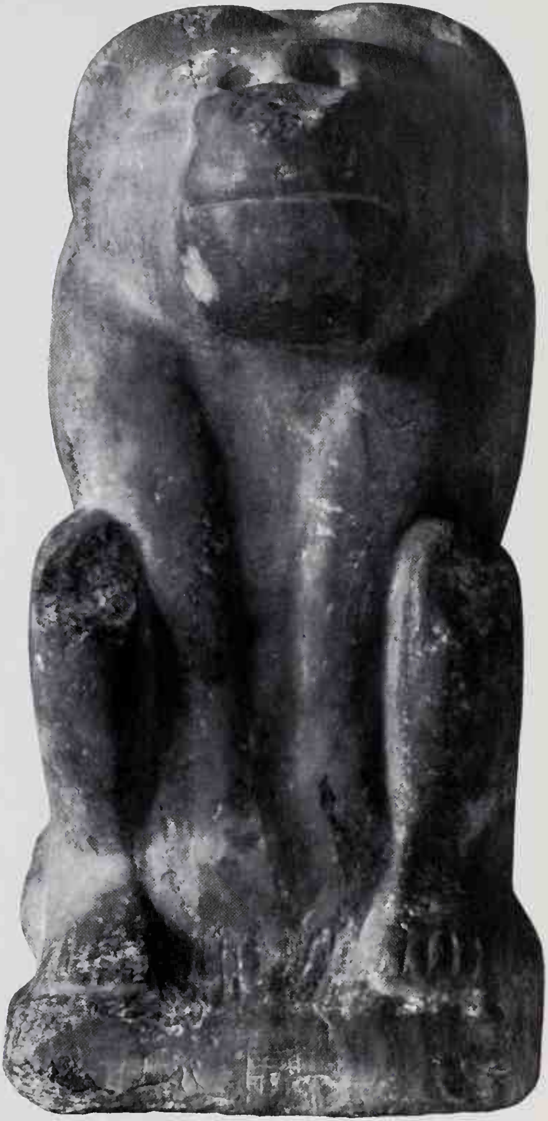
PRE-D 3000 BC



The animal powers of the prehistoric age accompany the Egyptians across the threshold of the classical age. The primitive animal-gods continue to appear in their original animal shapes even after their later humanization. Some power or god may be concealed behind every portrayal of an animal. Whether the lion with wide-open, menacing jaws represents a lionlike divinity or the king (as the son of this divinity), and whether Thueris, the later goddess of motherhood and fertility, is to be sought behind the plump, almost cozy, yet impressive hippopotamus, can not be known for certain.

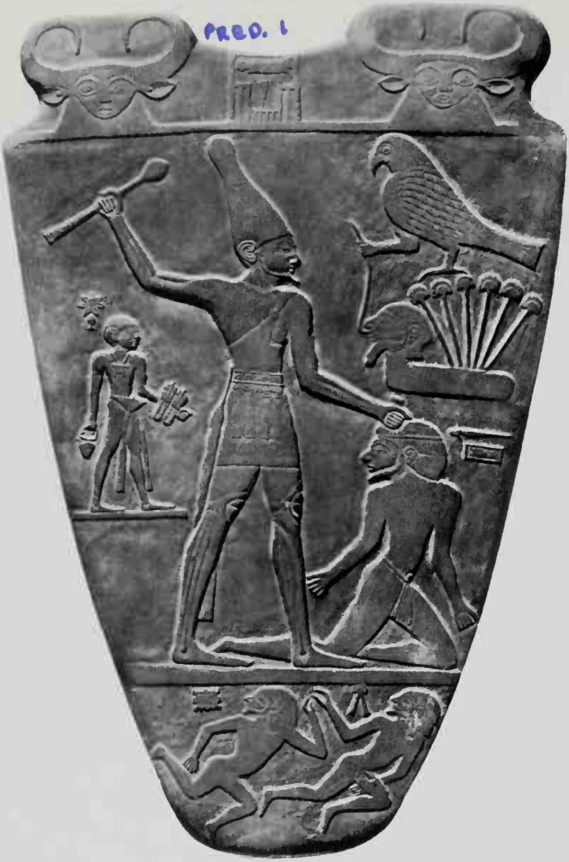
The name of King Narmer, which has been preserved on the base of the statue (right), indicates fairly certainly that this is a royal votive offering for the temple of the sacred baboon, who is known as the "Great White One" and was succeeded by the baboon-god Thoth in historical times.

Narmer's baboon is the oldest image of a divinity in the shape of an animal executed in the monumental style; but its compactness already exhibits the essential features of Egyptian sculpture. Only its front paws, squeezed clumsily between its legs, reveal that animal sculpture was in its infancy here.



Sacred baboon. Alabaster, height 20$^1/_2$". Archaic period, First Dynasty, c. 2950 B. C. State Museums, Berlin (East)

PRED. 1

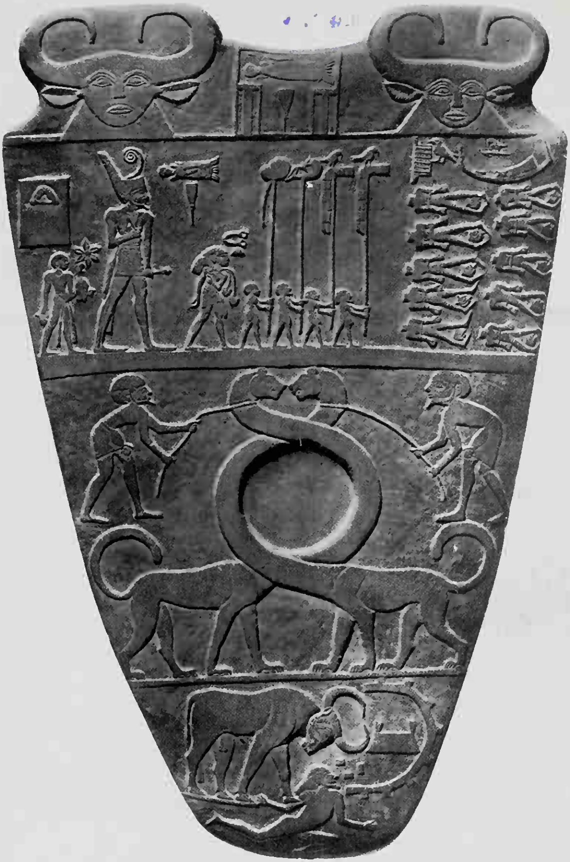


King Narmer's cosmetic palette (obverse and reverse). Slate, height 25″. Archaic period, First Dynasty, c. 2950 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

King Narmer's cosmetic palette is in many respects one of the most important relics of the Archaic period.

Historically, it depicts (left) the triumph of the king, wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, over his enemies. As in the bull palette (page 17), celestial powers or the divine manifestations of the king (hawk and bull) intervene in the struggle. The cupule side (facing page) shows the king, wearing the crown of Lower Egypt, which he has just conquered, marching in ceremonial procession toward ten chained and decapitated corpses lying on the ground. Perhaps this "state visit" was intended by the king to show his former adversaries that he was the heir to their erstwhile kingdom, and was now ruler of both lands (P. Derchain).

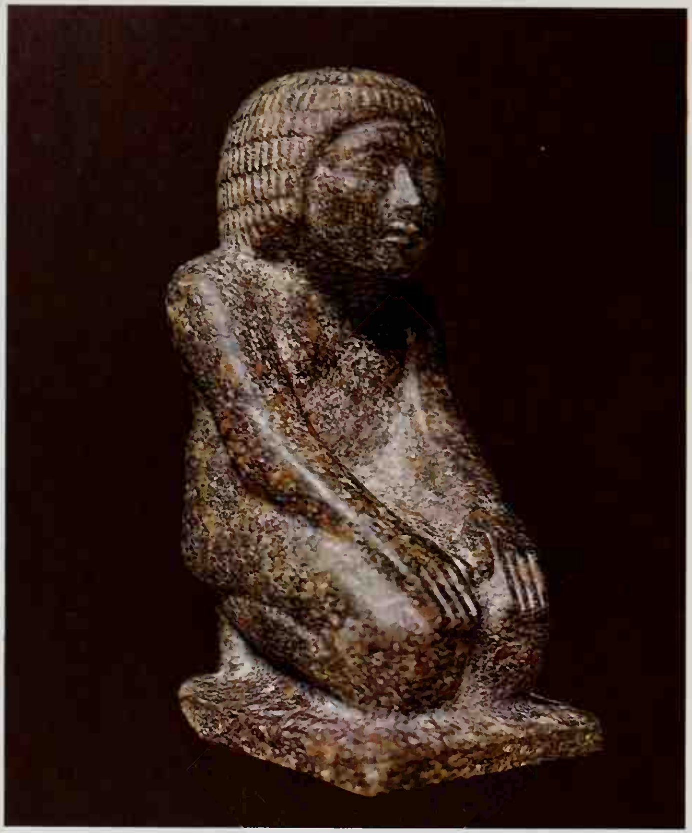
Mythologically, this palette shows that the cow in the upper part, standing in the four corners of the world, is beginning to supplant the older concept of the heavens. An older representation of heaven occupies the central field of the cupule side of the palette: the snakelike necks of two confronted panthers surround the circular depression for the rouge (cf. page 19). These beasts (like the lions on page 20) are to be interpreted as



the eastern and western horizons, between which there is the sun, which once more serves as the rouge cup. Two horizon divinities, placed at the ends of the world and therefore looking like barbarians, guide the sun across the heavens. We can clearly see a pull from left to right, from east to west.

From the standpoint of the history of civilization, we have here the appearance of pictographs as characters of hieroglyphic script. As symbols of persons and places, they fix the event depicted in space and time, thus highlighting and recording it historically in its uniqueness. The king's name (NAR = sheatfish, MER = chisel) is placed in the royal palace (upper part of the palette, between the four corners of the world) as well as in front of the king on the cup side of the palette. His manservant bears the title of "Servant of the God"; the enemy is identified as the "Harpoon Region."

Artistically, the division of the entire surface into separate fields, or registers, and the introduction of a base line as a dominating principle of arrangement are worthy of note. Representation of the human body as a combination of front and side views becomes basic for the next three thousand years.

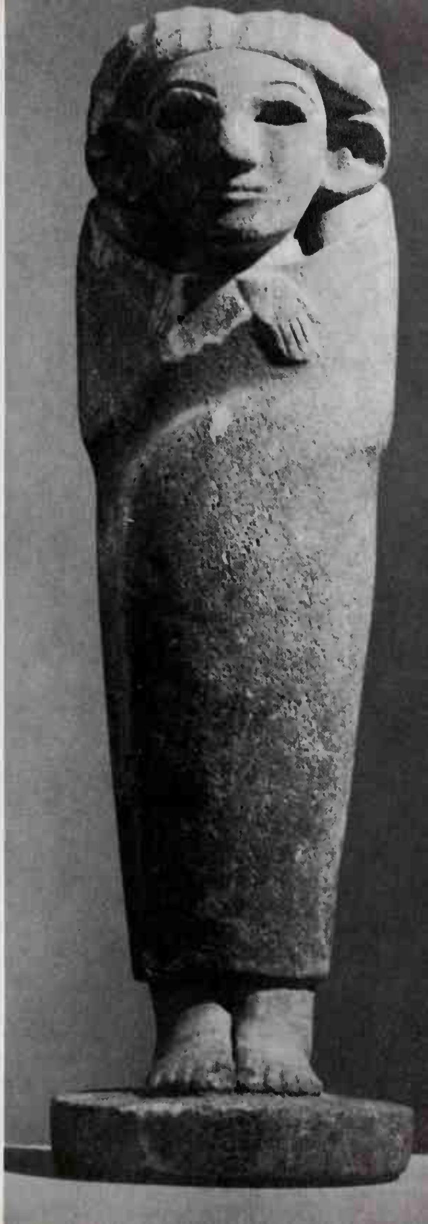


Kneeling man. Granite, height $15^3/_8$". Archaic period, Second Dynasty, c. 2800 to 2700 B.C. (or later?). From Memphis. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

This statue of a man kneeling with both hands resting on his knees is doubtless to be interpreted as a "man praying"; thus it is early evidence of divine worship. The names of the first three kings of the Second Dynasty on the man's back seem to indicate that he was in their service, probably attached to their mortuary temples.

The comparatively large head, bent forward, rests directly on the shoulders, indicating that the artist's as yet incomplete mastery of the stone evidently prevented him from carving out a narrow neck without the aid of a wig or back support.

Cloaked statuette. Limestone, height 11$^3/_4$". Archaic period, First Dynasty, c. 2900 B.C. From Abydos. Kofler-Truniger Collection, Lucerne



"He Who Belongs to the City" is the inscription on the front of the circular base. Does this then mean that the figure wrapped in a long cloak is a city-god? If so, this (together with the colossal prehistoric statues of the fertility-god Min from Coptos) is the oldest example of a god sculptured in human shape. If the inscription is the name of a man, however, then it would be an early representation of the deceased attaining new life, wrapped in the characteristic cloak.

The large, prominent ears are a noticeable feature; this peculiarity occurs again in the cloaked figures of the Middle Kingdom (page 84). The eyes and eyebrows, made of different material, were inlaid. The bodily forms revealed underneath the cloak are unable to free the figure from its mummylike rigidity.

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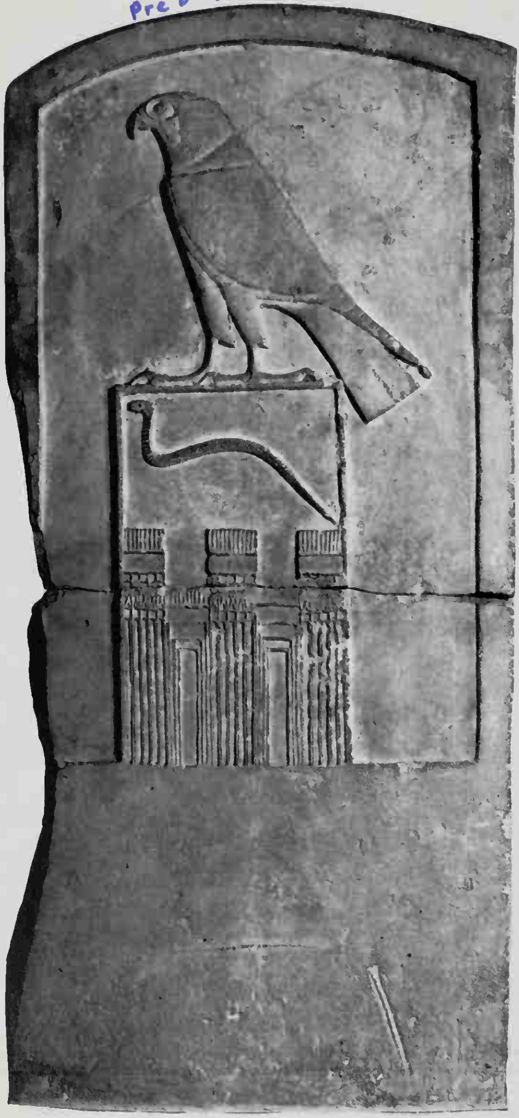


Stele of King Wadji ("Snake"). Limestone, width $25^1/_2$", original height $98^1/_2$". Archaic period, First Dynasty, c. 2850 B.C. From Abydos. The Louvre, Paris

The stele of King Wadji is one of the classical monuments of the Archaic Egyptian period. With this representation, he documents his claim to experience in death the fate of the heavenly Horus, securing eternal life, like the latter, by periodical reincarnations.

The stele itself is an image of the world: the two upright sides are the pillars of heaven, on which the arch of heaven rests, falling away toward the west (here at the left). At the center of the world, only slightly west of the central axis, there is the king's palace, designated by the "snake" (Wadji) hieroglyph. The hawk perched on the roof of the palace is the earthly form of Horus, the god of the world, who is incarnated in the reigning king, thus conferring upon him the title of "Horus." The Horus Wadji faces in the same direction as the path of the sun through the heavens: toward the west, the land of the dead. He, too, sets in the west as a dead man, to arise again in the east like the heavenly Horus. The lower, unworked portion of the stele was sunk in the earth, thus representing the underworld in this reproduction of the cosmos.

The Egyptian artist produced a masterpiece in this stele, felicitously combining simplicity and monumentality, realism and symbolism.

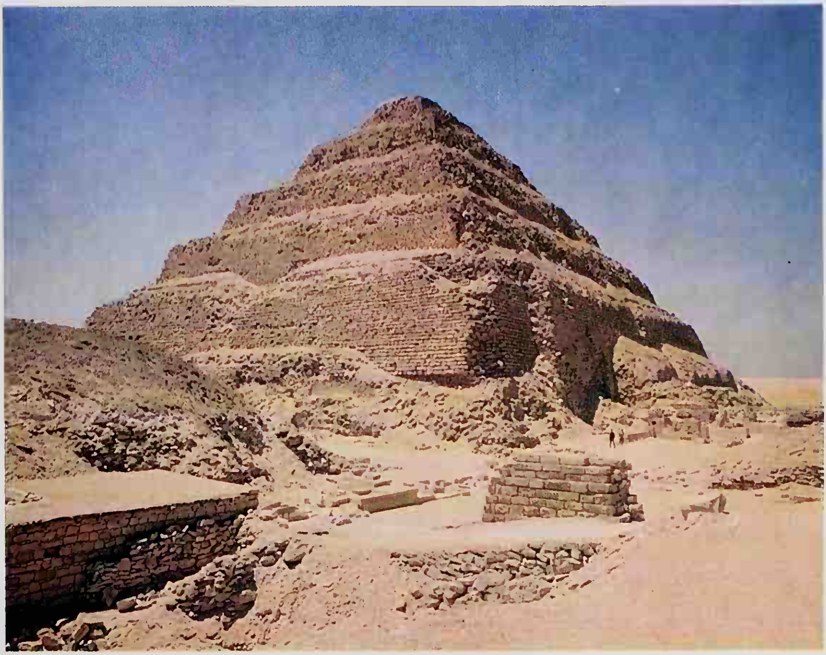
OLD KINGDOM

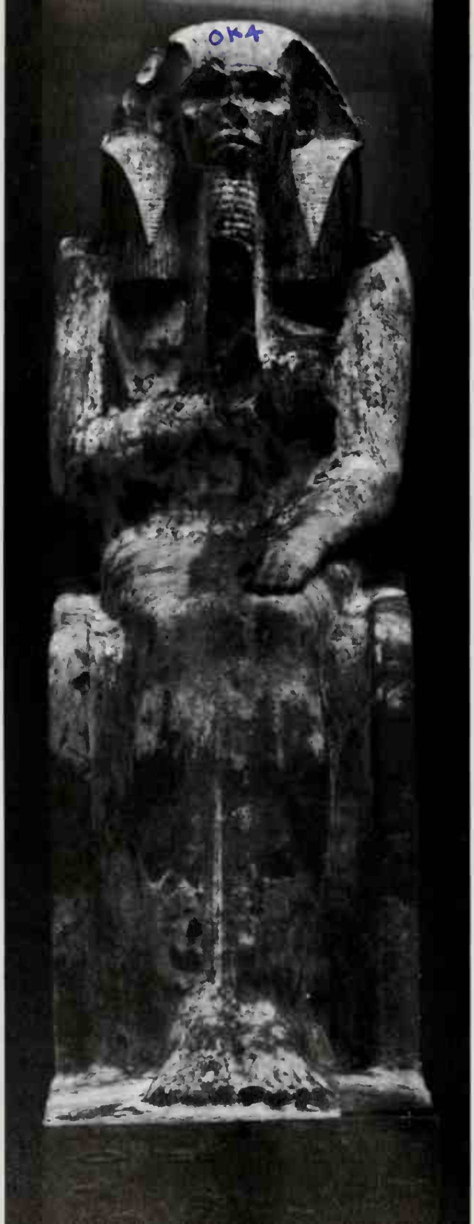
Third Dynasty (c. 2670–2590 B.C.)

Inside an enclosure some eighteen hundred feet long and nearly a thousand feet wide, the gigantic six-step royal mastaba rises as a monumental burial mound on a rectangular ground plan measuring approximately 360 by 385 feet. Mastaba ("bench" in Arabic) is the name given to the rectangular Old Kingdom tombs. Imhotep, the architect, who was later worshiped as a god, had the wooden structures of the king's terrestrial residence reproduced in stone for eternity.

Zoser's pyramid enclosure merged the structural elements of Upper and Lower Egypt, as a spectacular demonstration of the eternal unity of the two kingdoms into a single state. Laid out as a giant stage, the sacred buildings were used in festivities of the royal jubilee. This again bestowed on the king, during his lifetime, "millions of years" of glorious rule after his acted-out death and repeated reaccessions, and was intended to procure for him after death continuation of his reign in the other world.

Step pyramid of King Zoser, at Saqqara. Height 197′. Old Kingdom, Third Dynasty, c. 2650 B.C.



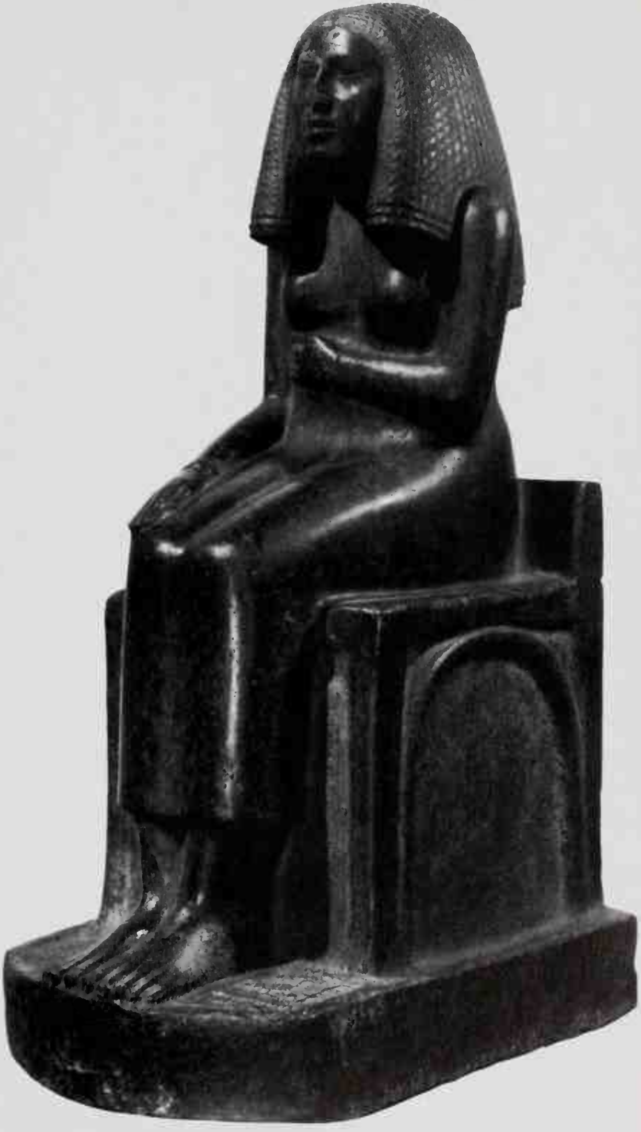


The seated figure of the king, almost life-size, was set up on the north side of the Saqqara step pyramid, in a statuary chamber leaning against the pyramid. The dead king could look up through two eye-level holes in the wall of the statue chamber at the polestar and the other fixed stars, the ultimate goal of his journey through the heavens.

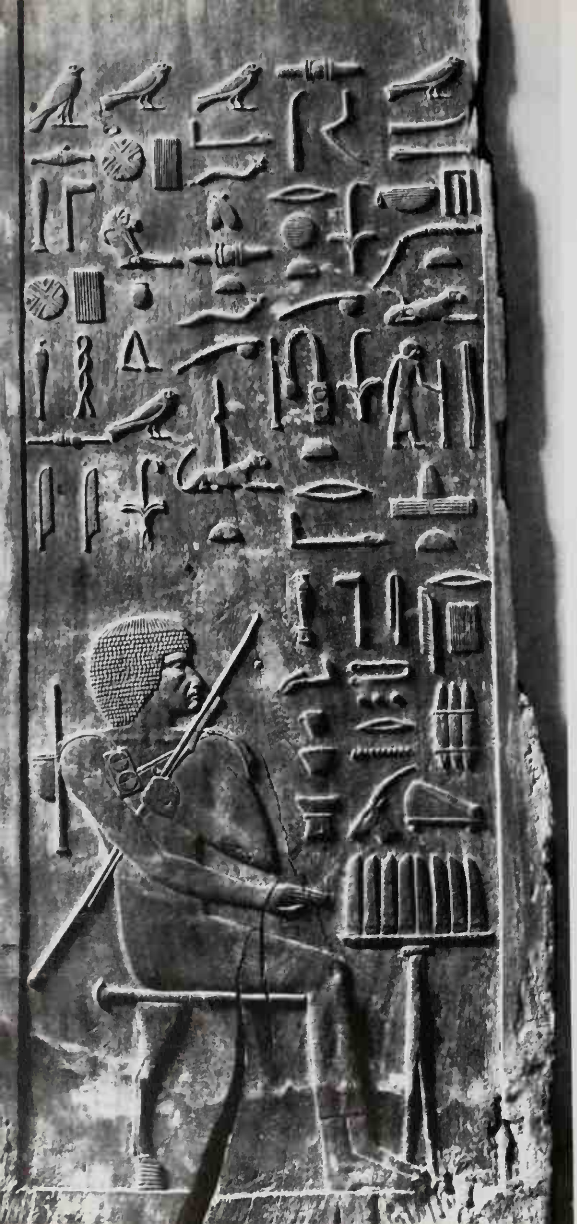
The loss of the statue's eyes, originally inlaid in rock crystal, gives its face the look of *rigor mortis*. The almost complete disappearance of the statue's paint, together with the stern attitude of the figure, cloaked in a long mantle, contributes to this impression. This, however, was not the impression that the artist originally wished to convey, nor could it possibly have been his intention, for the theme of this first life-size statue of a king actually was the overcoming of death. From countless other examples we know the meaning of the characteristic, peculiarly rigid positions of the hands: the clenched fist at the breast holds an amulet loop hanging down from the shoulders, the "blood of Isis" as it was later called, which promises the dead man new life by a sort of contact magic. The dead king, awaking to this new life, reaches with his other hand for the foods on the offering table, in order to secure new physical strength. The seated position is probably significant as well, for it indicates the transitional phase between the recumbence of the dead and the walk of the living.

Seated figure of King Zoser. Limestone, height 49½". Old Kingdom, Third Dynasty, c. 2650 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Redji, the king's daughter, is seated on the wooden stool with arched struts typical of the early period. She sits in the characteristic posture of the dead in the stage of eternal resurrection, one hand across her breast and the other apparently lying on her knee. We know, however, from analogous reliefs, such as that on page 32, that it is really stretched out above the thigh. This cubical stool still retains the blocklike form of the original material, though the shape of the human figure begins to stand out more and more freely, and there is a new boldness in the modeling.



Seated figure of Princess Redji. Diorite, height 32½". Old Kingdom, Third Dynasty, c. 2670–2590 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Turin



Hesy-ra, a high official of the Zoser period, had wooden slabs carved in relief mounted in niches along the west wall of his tomb in Saqqara. The lord of the tomb is seated on a stool (which has bulls' legs, as a reminder of an animal that used to carry the dead man) in the same posture that is obligatory for sculpture. His right hand reaches for the food piled up on an altar in front of him, and his left hand holds (together with a scepter and staff, the symbols of his high rank) the scapulary, not visible here—an amulet from which new life flows into him as it does from the sacrificial offerings (see page 30). If the wooden slab were painted, the long cloak would be seen to be a leopard's skin. This garb, the clothing of the leopard-goddess, also serves to procure new life. From his shoulder hang his writing implements (a color container, rush box, and palette with black and red ink) as symbols that Hesy-ra held the highly esteemed post of "scribe" (today we would call him a university-trained high official of a ministry).

Hieroglyphs form a frame around the portrait, like miniature individual works of art. They are not arranged in rigorous order, as in later periods; they state the titles and name of the deceased, whose portrait is really no more than an enlargement of part of his written name.

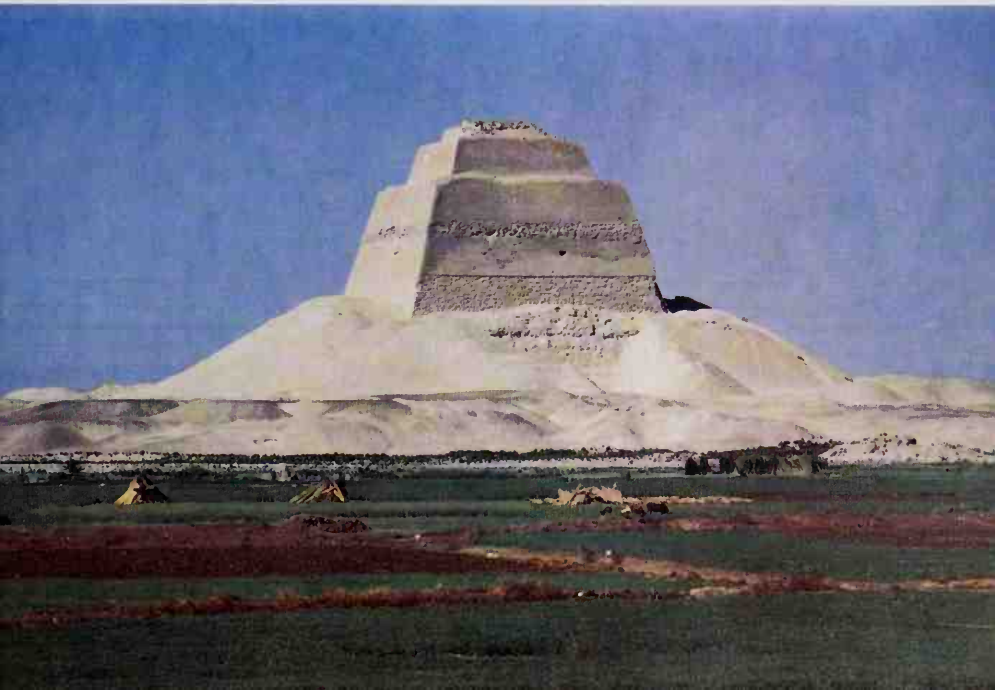
Hesy-ra before the altar, slab carved in relief. Wood, height 45". Old Kingdom, Third Dynasty, c. 2650 B.C. From his tomb in Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

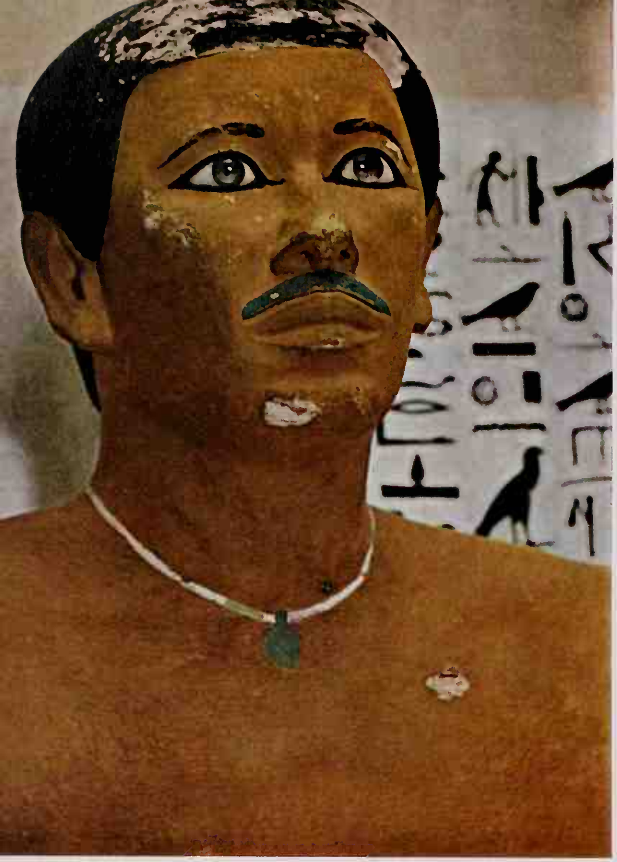
OLD KINGDOM

Fourth Dynasty (c. 2590–2470 B.C.)

The pyramid of Medum, which was probably completed in the reign of Sneferu, was the first true pyramid with sloping triangular sides. Even now, when it is nothing more than a ruin, with its outer facing eroded, the core of the pyramid is an impressive sight. The huge tower soaring skyward testifies to the unshakable building urge of the Old Kingdom's rulers and foreshadows the period of the Great Pyramids.

Pyramid of Medum. Height c. 213′. Old Kingdom, beginning of Fourth Dynasty, c. 2590 B.C.

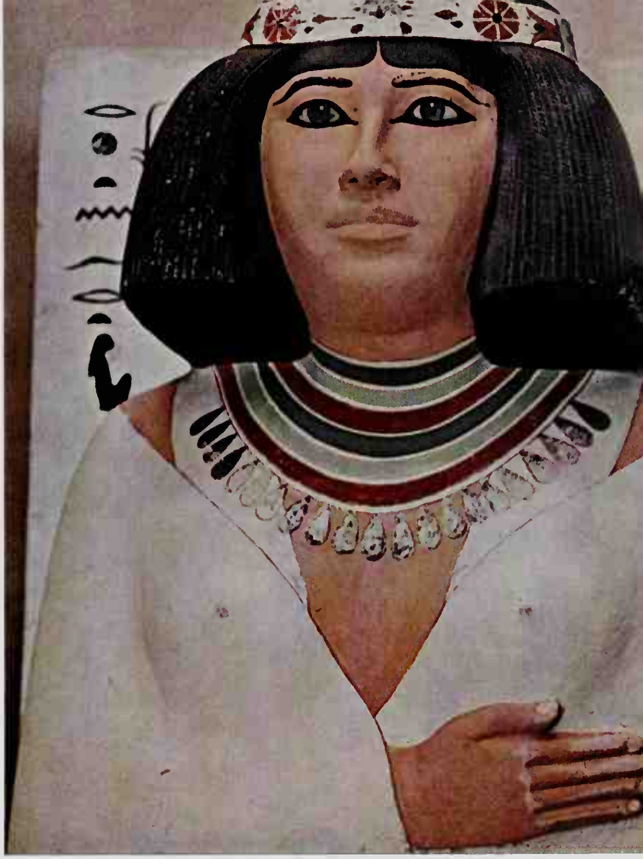




Details of the group of statues of Prince Rahotep and his consort Nofret. Limestone, heights of the details 13³/₄" and 17³/₄"; over-all heights 47¹/₄" and 44". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2570 B.C. From the tombs at Medum. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

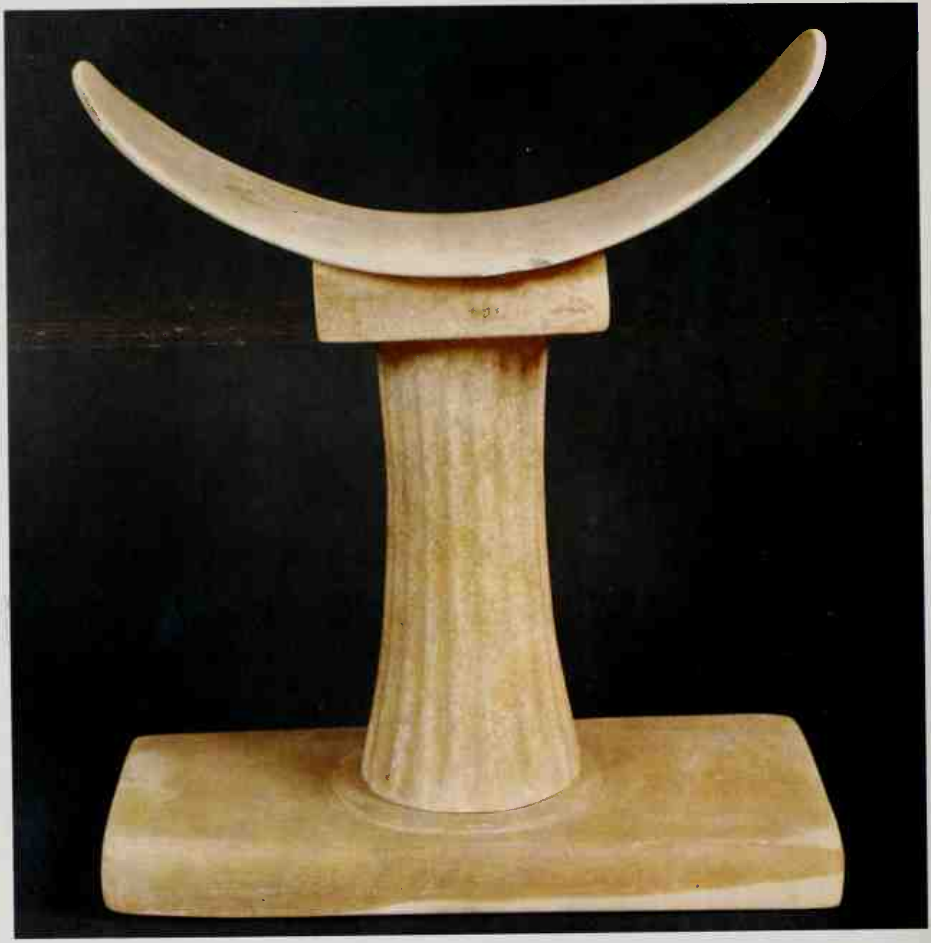
The two statues stood side by side—a marriage beyond the grave—in Rahotep's tomb alongside the Medum pyramid. The well-preserved fresh paint indicates what most of the old Egyptian statues were like. The Egyptians regarded color as the visible manifestation of inward essence (the same word was employed for "color," "appearance," and "essence"). As Egyptian works of art endeavored to convey the universally valid, rather than the transient, phenomenon, they employed paint for characterization, rather than for coloring. Thus, a light-yellow skin denotes a woman, as distinguished from the red-brown skin of a man.

Their names and titles are incised in the wall behind them, which acts like the back of a chair. Rahotep, a son



of Sneferu, was also high priest of Heliopolis and a general. His intelligent and energetic face suggests that he owed his high offices to something more than his kinship with the king. The animated expression of his eyes is achieved by the use of inlaid quartz, held in place by mountings designed as the edges of the eyelids. Rahotep wears a chain with a pendant around his neck.

His consort Nofret is both austere and attractive. She wears a wide collar made in imitation of the sun's rays, and a diadem set with flower ornaments rests on her heavy wig, below which some of her own hair is seen. Over her dress she wears a long white robe, which reveals as well as conceals the shape of her body.



Headrest. Alabaster, height $9^1/_2$". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550 B.C. From a tomb in Giza. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim

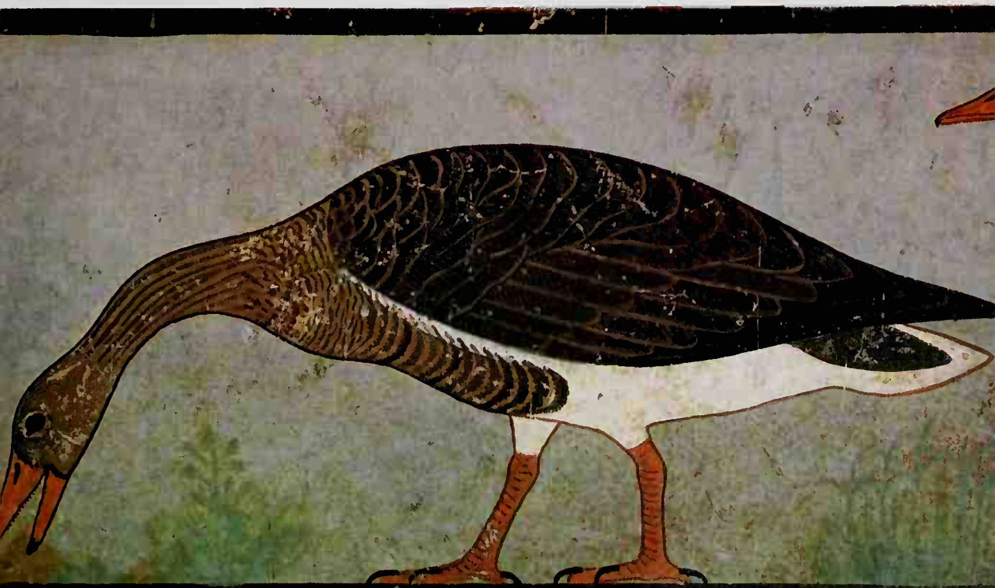
The same unpretentious style, concentrating on the essentials, that distinguishes the monumental structures of the Fourth Dynasty, is found in the small works of art, such as this headrest from a Giza tomb. This is a classically beautiful work of art, entirely reduced to essentials, free of all ornamental and illustrative trimmings. The flutes of the shaft are ornamental, to be sure, but they are merely copied from the wooden original.

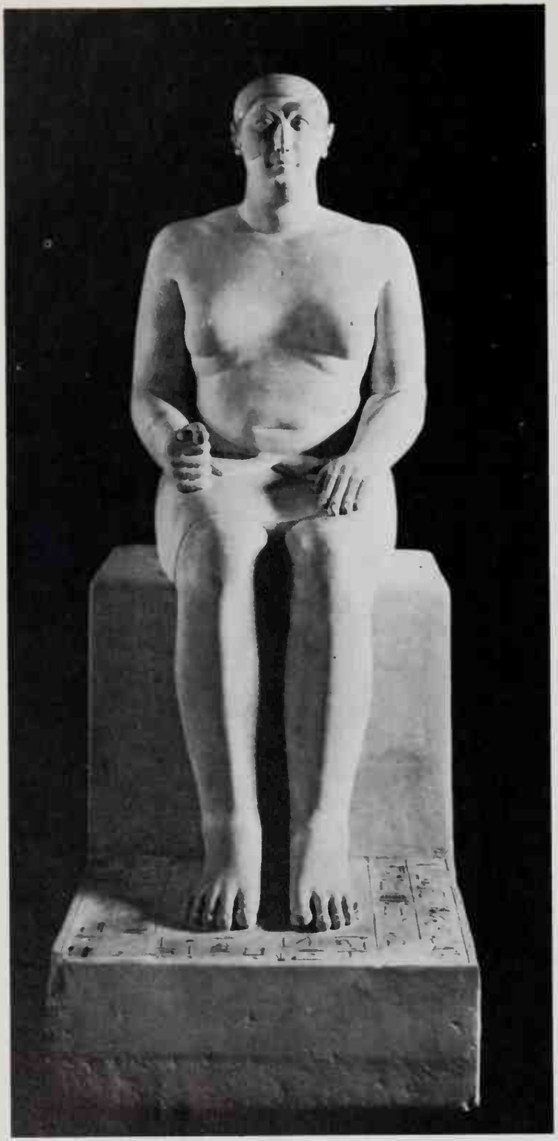
Besides its practical use, affording comfort to the sleeper as he lay on his side, the headrest was also intended to protect the sleeping (and therefore defenseless) man against demons, as is evidenced by later examples. Tiny headrests worn as amulets prove their apotropaic nature.

Egyptian painting attained its first climax in the celebrated "Geese of Medum." A frieze of six geese formed part of the bird-hunting scene in the ritual chamber of the tomb of Princess Atet. Hunting scenes like this one, plus motifs from agriculture and trade, were part of the tomb's appointments, for they magically helped to provide food for the dead.

This detail is the left-hand end of the symmetrically arranged frieze (there are two pairs of geese, overlapping and with heads erect, toward the center of the wall). The strong outline of the goose stands out against the blue-gray background and the vegetation, done in malachite green and red. This is simply a stylized goose outline, but the bird can be accurately identified as a bean goose by the realistic depiction of the details. This is a beautiful example of the painter's skill in bringing together a close observation of nature and abstraction in order to produce a combination of characteristic and individual traits.

Detail of the Medum goose frieze. Paint on plaster, detail $9^1/_2 \times 18''$ (entire frieze $9^1/_2 \times 63''$). Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2570 B.C. From the tomb of Atet at Medum. Egyptian Museum, Cairo





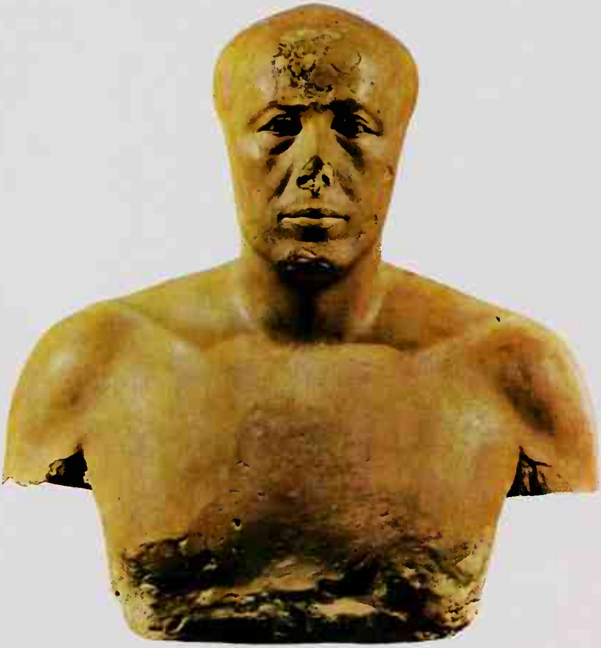
Seated figure of Prince Hemiunu. Limestone, height 61½". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550 B.C. From his tomb in Giza. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim

Like the pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty, the portraits of this period are extremely austere and simple, and sometimes ponderous, monumental, and exaggerated to the gigantic. Typical of these, and a masterpiece in its own right, is the seated figure of Prince Hemiunu, a nephew of King Cheops, and certainly one of the most influential persons in the administration of the kingdom. The whole personality of this man is expressed in his statue: he need not have looked so powerful, but he must have been a powerful man.

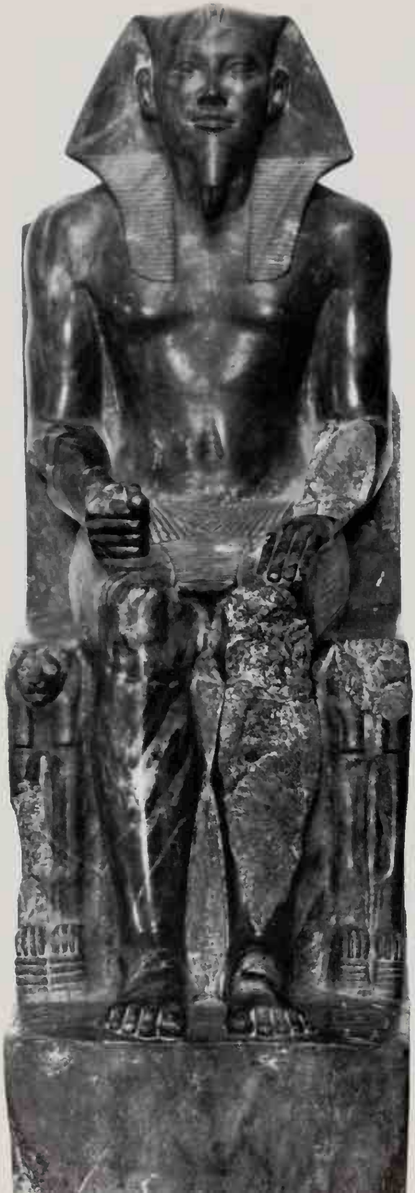
Without any outward emblem of his high rank, Hemiunu is enthroned, in full dignity, on a cube-shaped seat, the severity of which is typical of the architecture of the period. The only breaks in the smooth surfaces are the titles and name carved into the base plinth as indispensable parts of the personality. The position of the hands has changed somewhat from that in the older examples: one hand still reaches for the offerings, but the other, which was formerly placed across the breast, now lies on the knee. It clasps the old shoulder loop, which promises life as an amulet and signifies "recovery" as a hieroglyph. The enormous body, with its folds of flesh, likewise serves as a kind of hieroglyph, indicating the status and wealth of the subject. The upper half of the face, disfigured by ancient grave robbers (they knocked out the metal settings of the eyes), has been restored in modern times. The hair, which was painted black originally, now has the appearance of a flat cap.

The bust of Prince Ankh-haf, vizier and son-in-law of King Cheops, stands out among the statues of the pyramid period in two respects. As a bust, it is a special type of statue, substituting the part for the whole, and it presumably stood on a base up against the wall of a brick offering room alongside the mastaba. This bust is very closely related to the contemporary portrait heads (see page 48) as far as the independent representation of an important part of the body is concerned. Isolated examples indicate, however, that the original idea of a statue extending only down to the chest may well have been to show the deceased as he arises from the depths of the underworld into the realm of the living.

What constitutes the outstanding artistic value of this bust and has gained it the highest acclaim, however, is the artist's successful effort to go beyond the idealized portrait, creating unmistakably individual representations, that is, realistic portraits, which show man as a personality, not only in his actual existence, but also in his appearance (here again we see a kinship with the portrait heads). In the Ankh-haf bust, the artist's success in handling the personal details of the prince's face and body, and in modeling a portrait of the greatest vitality, is largely due to the soft material in which he worked.



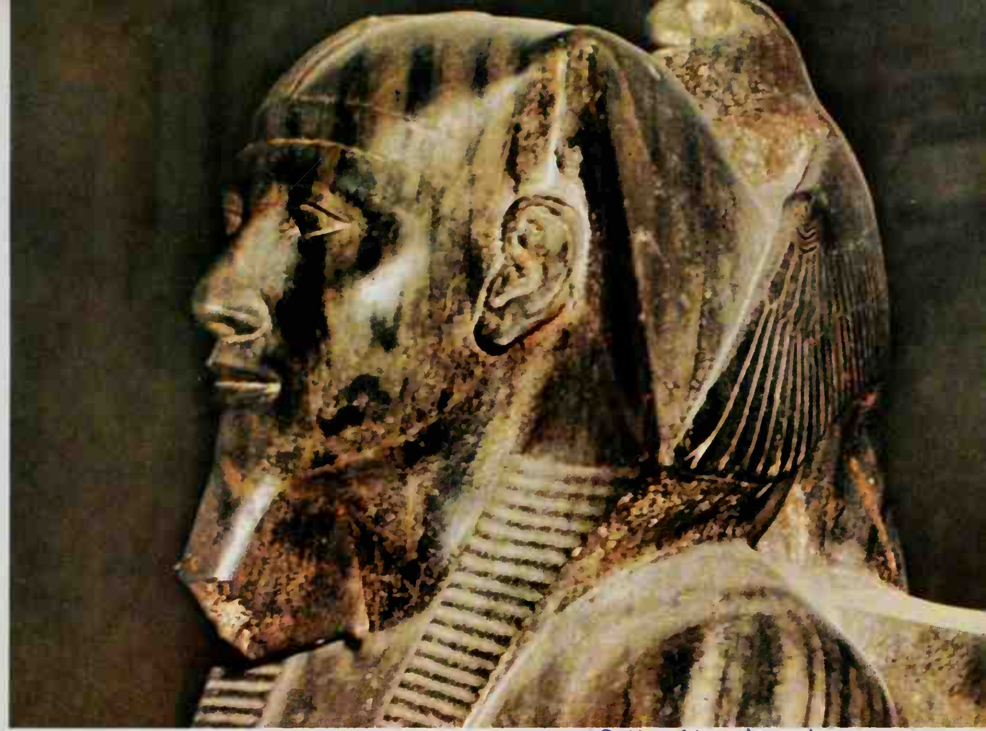
Bust of Prince Ankh-haf. Limestone covered with stucco, height c. $19^3/_4$". Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550–2500 B.C. From his tomb at Giza. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Seated statue of King Chephren (and detail, facing page). Diorite, height 66″. Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2500 B.C. From Giza. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Embalming and the rites of "opening the mouth," which transfigured the dead king for life in the hereafter as Osiris, were performed in the valley temple of King Chephren (page 46), while his son and successor ascended the throne as the new Horus king.

The dead king, in the form of his statues, participated in the cult. One of the statues, which once numbered twenty-three, shows the king on the lion-throne, adorned with the insignia of royalty: the Pharaoh's headgear, the ceremonial beard, and the royal kilt. His right hand,

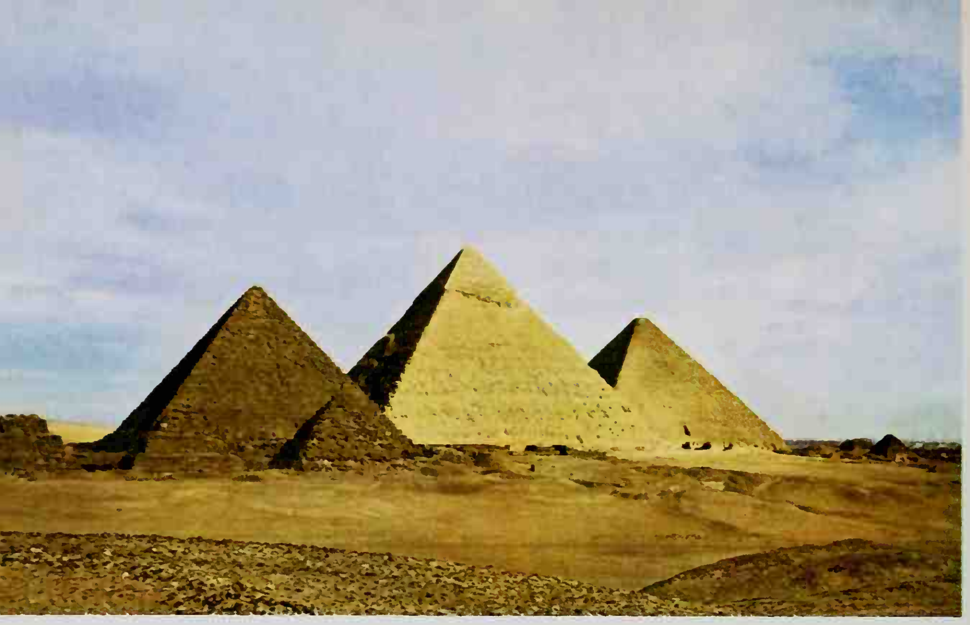


OLD KINGDOM 4th dynasty

clenched into a fist, holds the "loop of rebirth," while his left hand reaches out for the offerings (cf. page 32).

Behind the king, perched on the back of the throne is Horus, the hawk-god, lord of the universe. In the latter's aspect as the youthful god of the morning, he was the son of Osiris, the great god of the underworld, to whom the king desired to return to be united with in death. The Osiris myth, which becomes comprehensible only at a later date, reports that, after his murder by his brother Seth, Osiris became ruler of the hereafter, while Horus, his son, heir, and avenger, became the new King of Egypt. Indispensable in this was the aid of the throne-goddess Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris and mother of Horus. Thus the statue probably depicts the intercession of Horus on behalf of his dead father Osiris, while the lion's shape of the throne should probably be regarded as an archetype of the goddess Isis. We would then have, in this statue, a triad of divinities.

The king has entered upon his eternal rule as a god; he has carried with him to the beyond the noblest and most royal features of man and stamped them upon the image of the god. This combination of humanity at its highest point with divinity in its eternal radiance is uniquely successful here, so that this masterpiece is justly considered one of the most perfect creations of ancient Egyptian art.



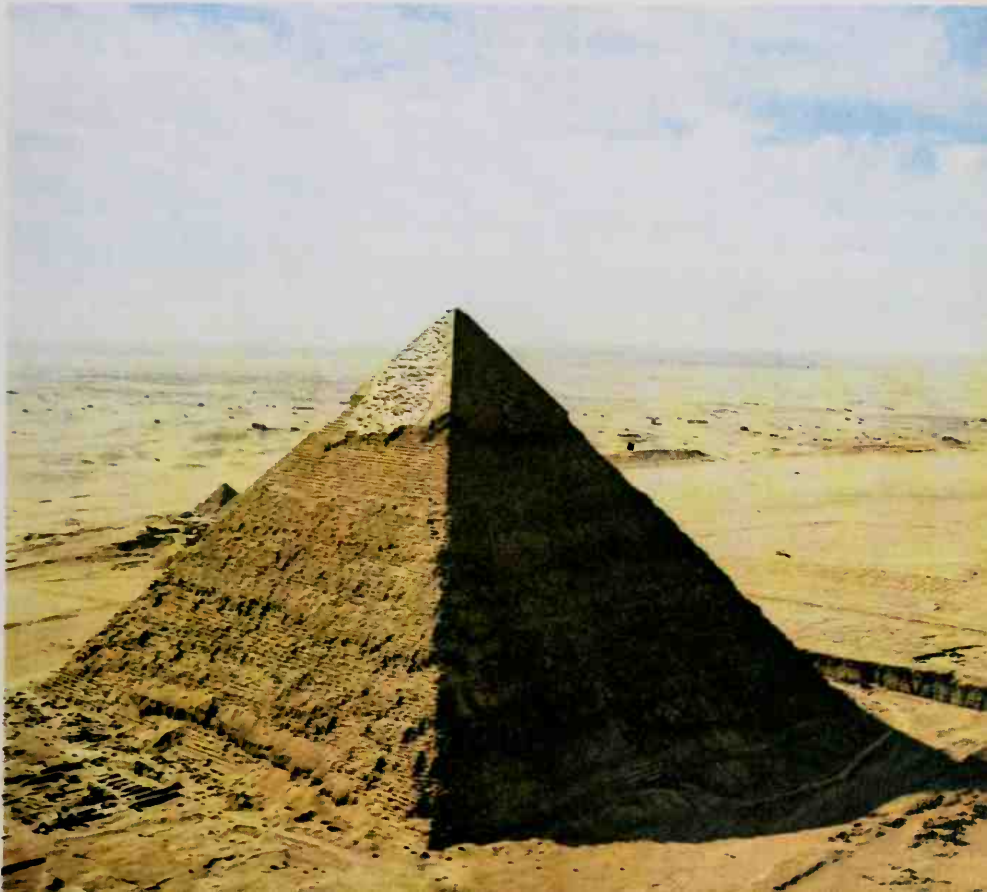
Pyramids of Giza, view from the south of the pyramids of Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus (from right to left). Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2560–2475 B.C.

The gigantic pyramids of Kings Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus tower into the sky as eternal reminders that the rulers buried beneath them have begun their voyage from these stone tombs up to heaven, like their heavenly prototype, the sun.

By providing their tombs, originally constructed as step pyramids (see page 29), with an outer facing, the builders of the Fourth Dynasty created the classic, simple stereometric form that is typical of their time. Their construction must have involved tremendous efforts by the whole country. The Cheops pyramid had a base length of 754 feet and was originally 485 feet high (only 70 feet lower than the Washington Monument). This great stone mountain is made of more than two million limestone blocks measuring some forty inches each way and weighing on average about two and one-half tons. The Greek Herodotus, writing at the time of the Persian Empire, reports that one hundred thousand men were employed for two years in its construction. We can understand, therefore, why posterity saw Cheops as a pitiless despot who forced his people to perform compulsory labor for him because of his personal ambition. No doubt the ancient Egyptian fellah, who had to move the blocks of stone up inclined ramps (and was paid for it), did not always sing cheerful songs as he toiled. Yet the idea must have crossed his mind at some time or other that in this service for his king-turned-god he was also fulfilling a part of his own desire for immortality, for the Egyptians lived by the mercy of their king here on earth and hoped to do the same in the hereafter.

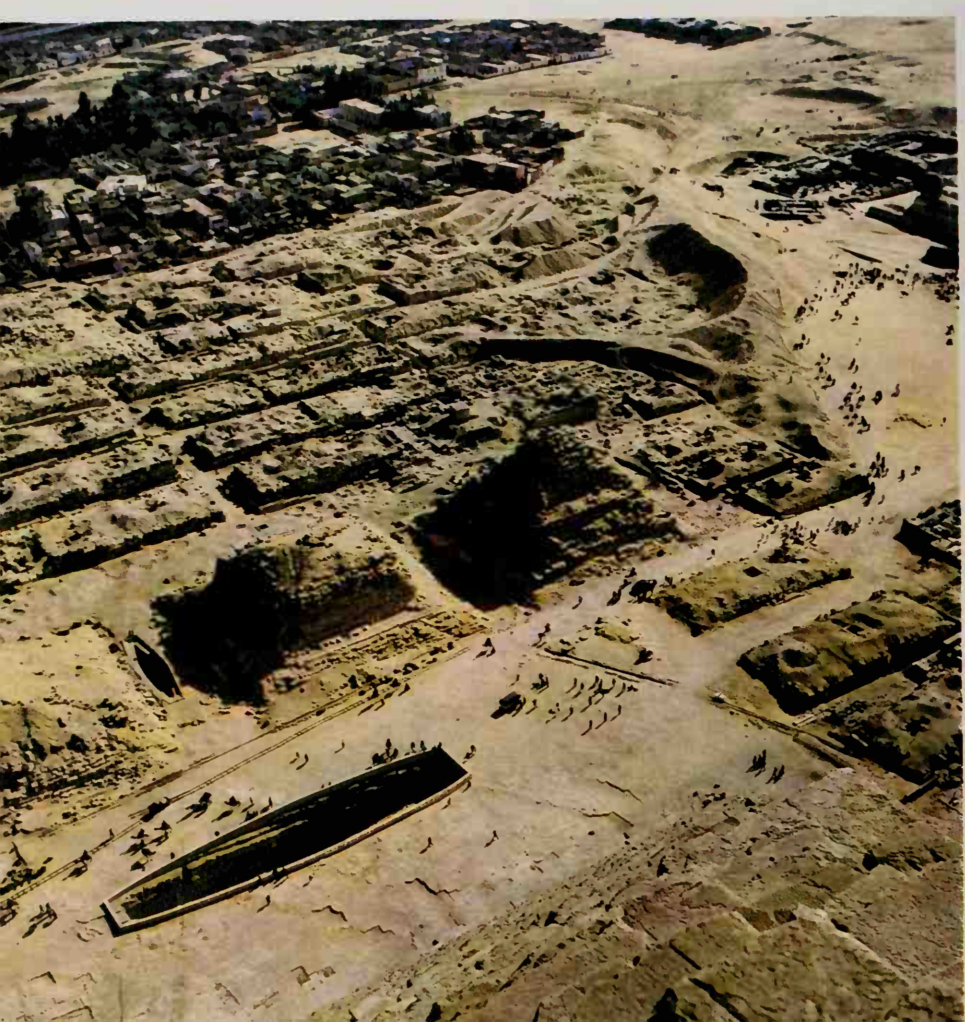
From the top of the Cheops pyramid (by now flattened out and only 449 feet high) we see the Chephren pyramid, which is now approximately the same height (it was originally 470 feet). This lies southwest of the Cheops pyramid, exactly on the prolonged diagonal of the latter. Vestiges of its original facing can be seen at the top. The ruins of the mortuary temple are at the east side of the pyramid (at the left of the photograph); at the north side (in the shadow) there is the entrance, which was also the way out toward the fixed stars of the northern sky.

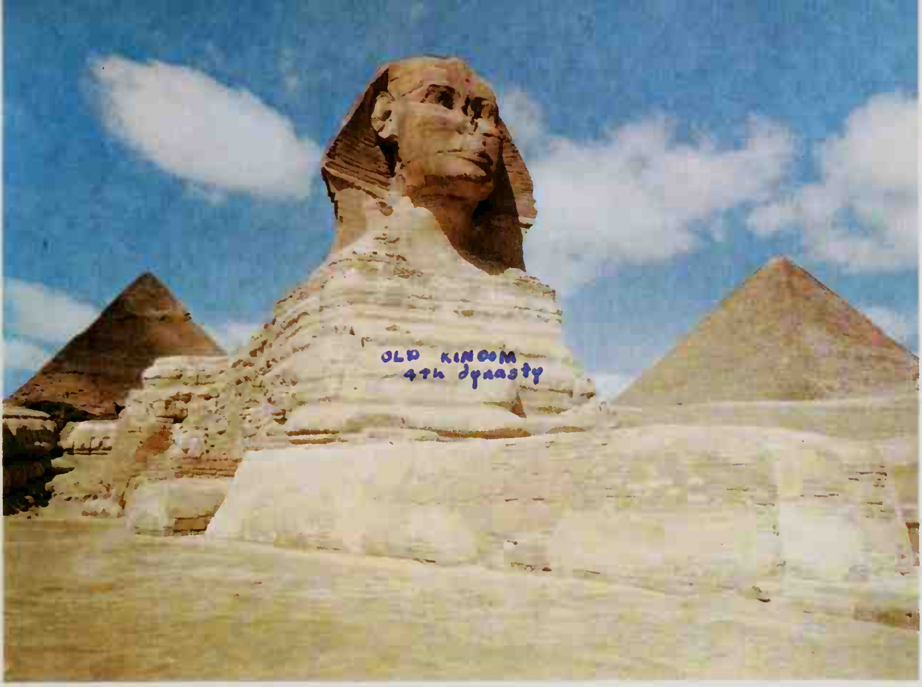
The Chephren pyramid as seen from the Cheops pyramid



On the southeast side of the Cheops pyramid are the rectangular tombs of the high officials who were laid to rest at the feet of their lord in the mastabas he had built for them. Three smaller pyramids for queens stand between these and the Cheops pyramid. At the foot of the pyramid we see one of the cuttings in the rock, in which the king's funerary ships were buried. At the upper (western) edge the desert gives way abruptly to the fertile land bordering the Nile.

The mastaba cemetery seen from the Cheops pyramid





The Great Sphinx, in front of the pyramids of Cheops (at the right) and Chephren. Limestone, length 240′, height 65′. Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550–2500 B.C. At Giza

At the eastern edge of the pyramid area, alongside the causeway to the Chephren pyramid, there lies the colossal Sphinx, enigmatic combination of lion and king, as the guardian of the necropolis. It is usually interpreted as a symbol of the unity of power and spirit embodied in the king. The Egyptians of the New Kingdom, however, called this colossus "Horus on the Horizon," regarding it as the rising sun-god, the light of early morning, the symbol of resurrection and reawakening to life. Perhaps our interpretation should start from that as a basis, regarding "Horus" as the dead king turned into the sun-god and the "horizon" as the element that envelops him, from which the sun and the king burst forth to new life. Burial of the king in a lion's skin has physically united him with the lion-goddess; he hopes for rebirth from her body. Accordingly, the Sphinx is a monumental variant of the idea that we have already encountered in the seated figure of Chephren (pages 40–41): the dead king, who has become Osiris through the mediation of the lion-goddess, experiences his resurrection in Horus, the god's son.

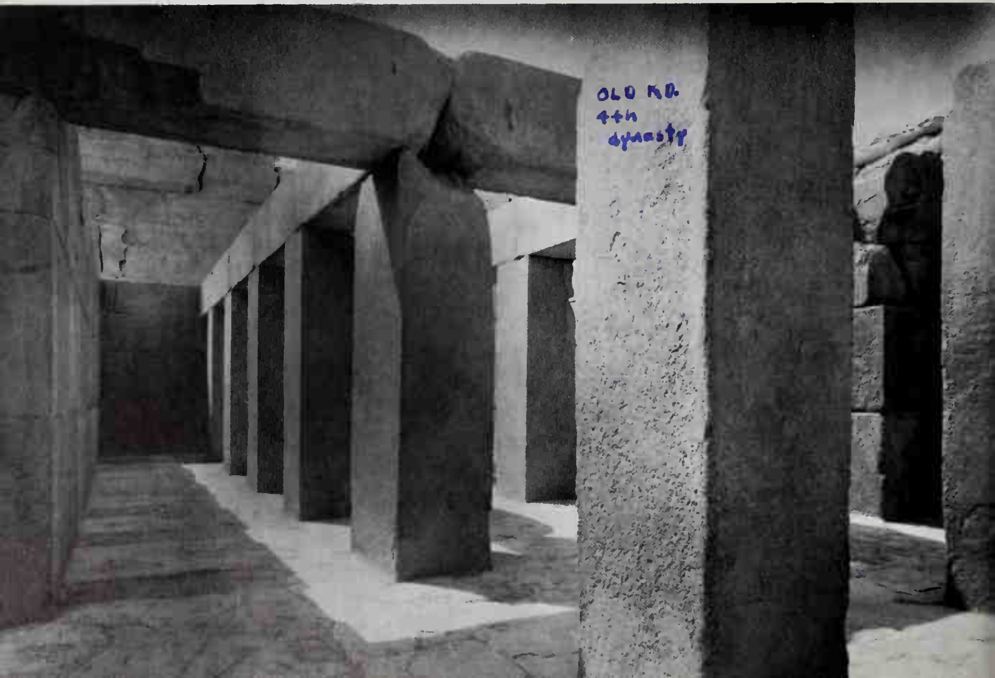
The two pyramids, some five hundred yards distant in the background, are those of Cheops (at the right) and of Chephren.

Mycerinus had the same event depicted several times, with variations according to the different districts to ▶ which they were distributed. The celestial goddess Hathor ("House of Horus"), anthropomorphized from the form of a cow wearing the sun-disk, has received her son, Mycerinus, the earthly Horus, back into her care. This may well be the interpretation of the motif of the clasped hands, indicating a "holy marriage" of the king and the goddess. If this does not represent reunion in death (as is suggested by the placing of these statues in the tomb), it must represent the conception of his successor, who, according to the evidence of a later dogma, sprang from the marriage between the royal house and a celestial deity.

The valley temple, a stone re-creation of the ancient purification tent, in which the dead king was prepared for eternal rest, is situated at the edge of the fertile land. A covered causeway leads from the temple to the pyramid. The monolithic columns of pink granite and the floor of alabaster are typical of the Fourth Dynasty style, which combined a noble simplicity with monumentality.

Hall of columns in Chephren's valley temple. Granite and alabaster, height of pillars 13'6". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2500 B.C. At Giza ▼

Mycerinus and Hathor with the local deity of Diospolis Parva. Green schist, height 38 5/8". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2480 B.C. From the king's valley temple at Giza. Egyptian Museum, Cairo ▶



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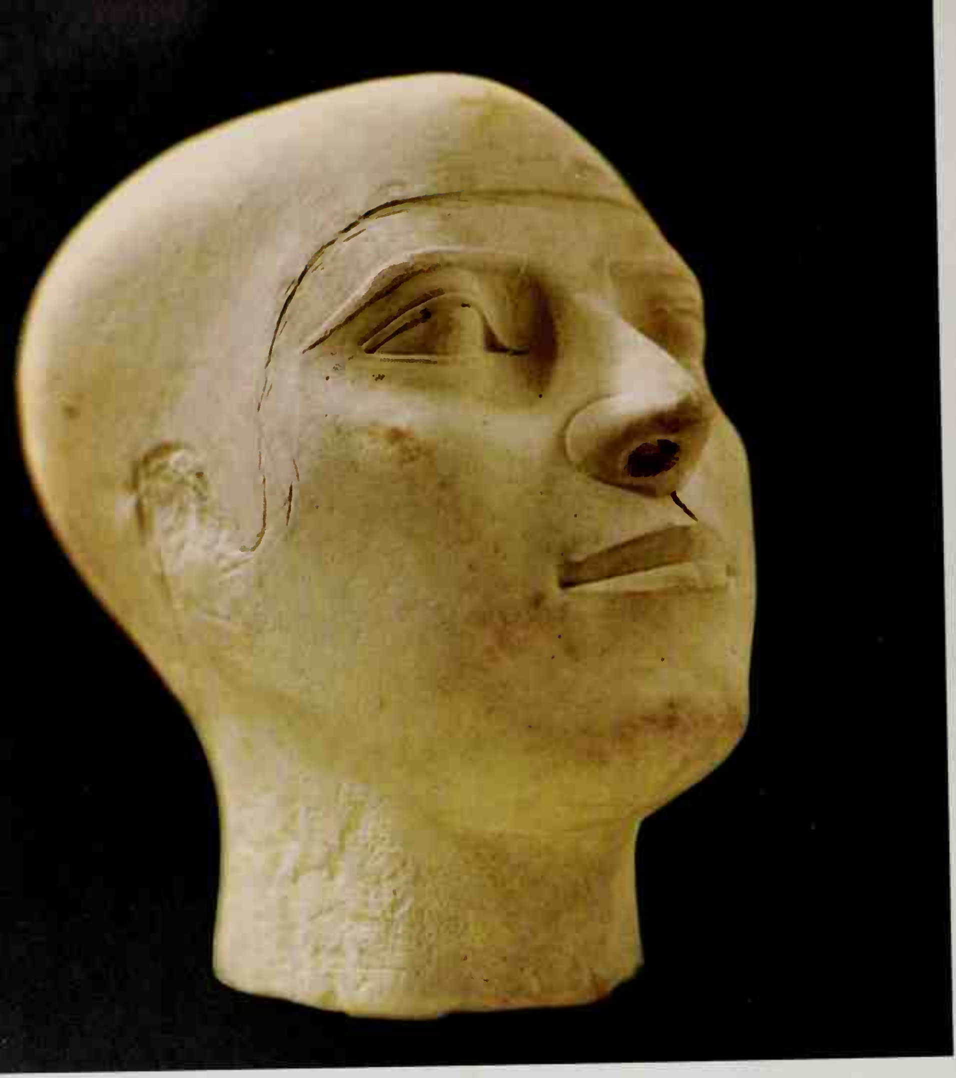
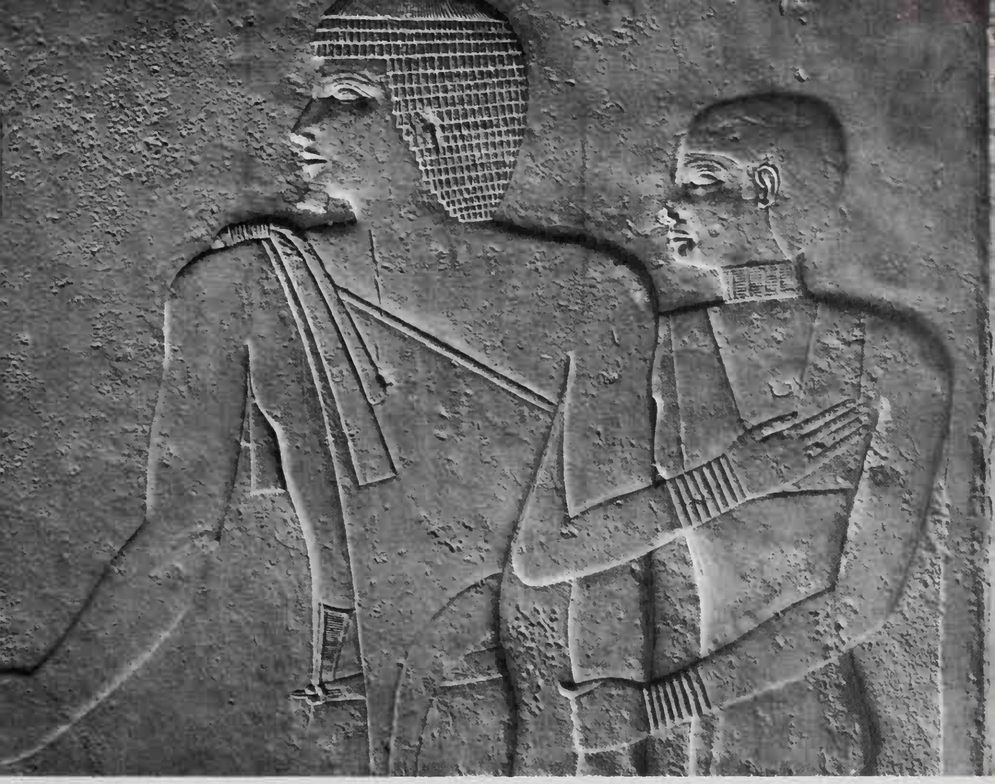


Portrait head. Limestone, height c. $11^3/_4$". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550–2500 B.C. From a tomb at Giza. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

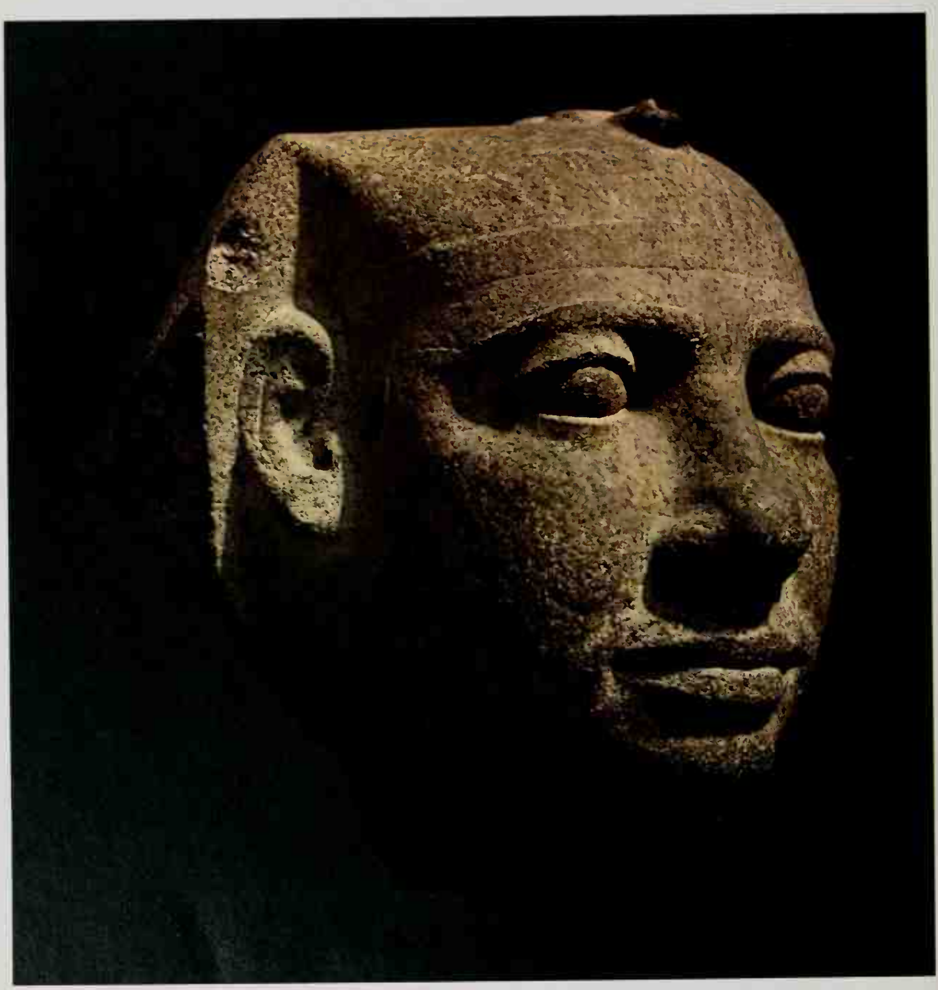


Prince Khufu-khaf and his consort. Limestone, approximate width of the detail 29$^1/_2$". Old Kingdom, Fourth Dynasty, c. 2550 B.C. From his tomb at Giza. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Prince Khufu-khaf ("Cheops Radiates"), wearing the leopard's skin with the characteristic loop amulet, is embraced by his wife. This is a delicate intimation that married love endures after death, that it actually conquers death.

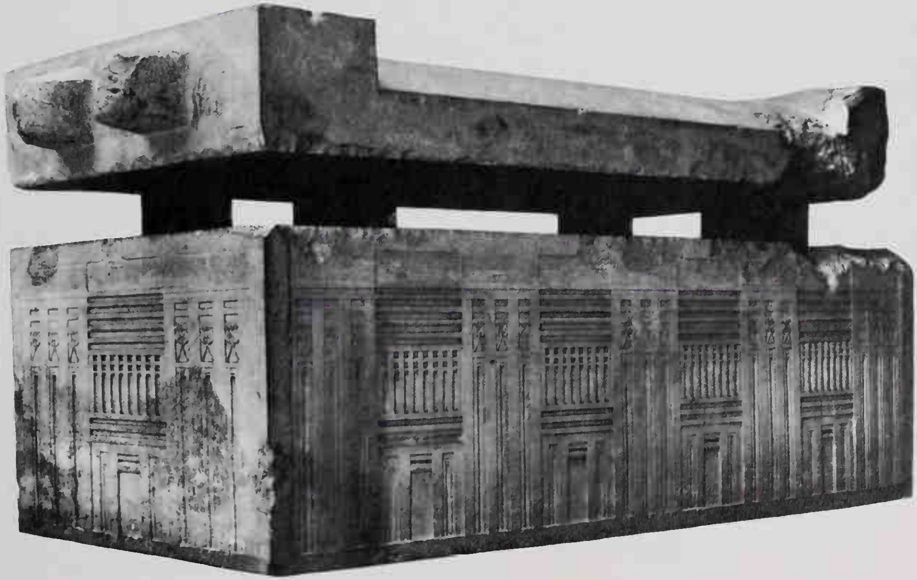
◀ A head of the deceased was set up in the tombs of the Cheops and Chephren periods instead of a statue. In spite of all its stylization, it exhibits a trend toward portrayal of the individual's personality (cf. page 38). The absence of the paint makes the hair look like a cap, and the ears are missing. The head, which rests on its original base, is tilted upward slightly, reminding us of the figure of King Zoser sitting in his statue chamber and gazing up toward the stars (page 30).

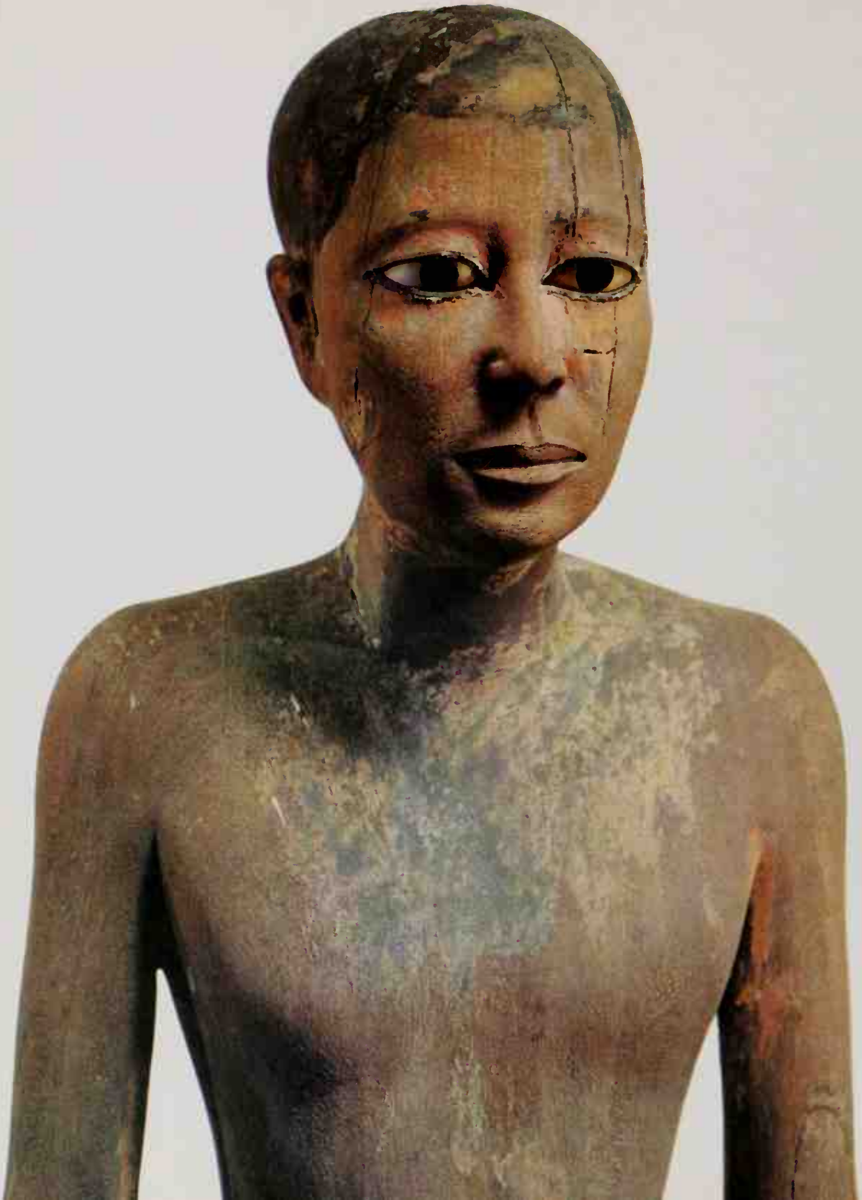
Colossal head of King Weserkaf, founder of the Fifth Dynasty. Granite, height 26³/₈″. Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2470–2460 B.C. From the mortuary temple of his pyramid at Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

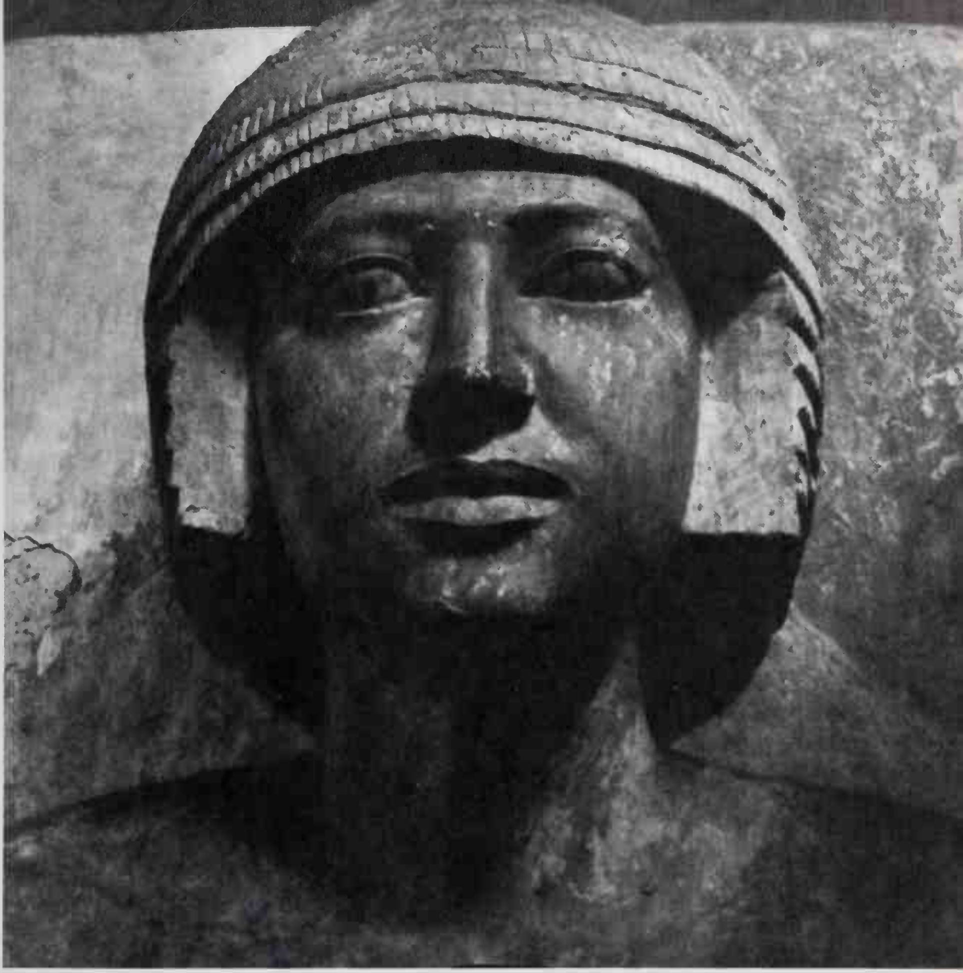


This sarcophagus, imitating the Thinite funerary palace, is based on the notion of the coffin as a dwelling for the dead. From it we can infer the design of the palaces built of Nile-mud bricks, none of which has been preserved. The division of the palace façade into niches is seen in the stele of King Wadji (page 28). It is worthy of note that such a sarcophagus was utilized by a dignitary, for here we have an early example of a process that has been termed the "democratization" of the ancient Egyptian cult of the dead. Funerary customs that were originally reserved for the king and were significant only for him spread to members of the royal house, most of whom were high administrative officials, until finally every Egyptian secured the right of identifying himself in death with Osiris, the royal god of the dead.

Sarcophagus of Ra-wer. Limestone, height c. 31 1/2", length c. 79", width c. 39".
Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2430 B.C. From Giza. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



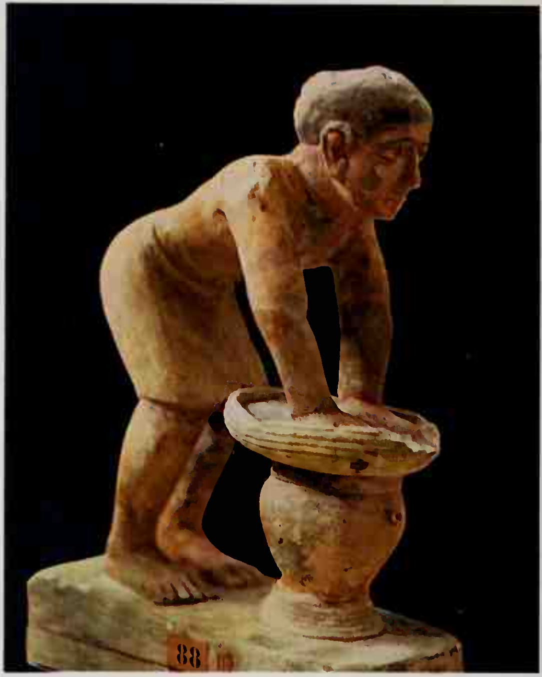




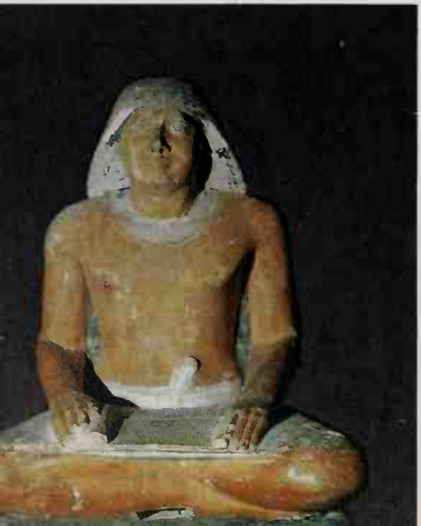
◀ Statuette of Methethy. Wood, over-all height 24 1/4"; height of detail c. 10". Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2330 B.C. From Saqqara. Brooklyn Museum, New York

Statue of Ti. Limestone, over-all height 78 3/4"; height of detail c. 15 3/4". Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2400 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Figure of a servant. Limestone, height 15³/₄". Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2350 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Scribe. Limestone, height 19¹/₄". Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2400 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo
▼



By having himself portrayed as a scribe (more exactly, in this instance, as a reader), the lord of the tomb attests that he belongs to the intellectual elite of the nation. He is seated with crossed legs, rolling up with his right hand the papyrus that he has finished reading. He gazes straight ahead, showing that the artist did not intend to represent the act of reading as much as to make a universal portrait of an educated man, in contrast to the more down-to-earth figures of servants.

The composition of the figure reminds one of a pyramid: the legs constitute the base while the lines of the upper arms lead up through the wig to the apex.

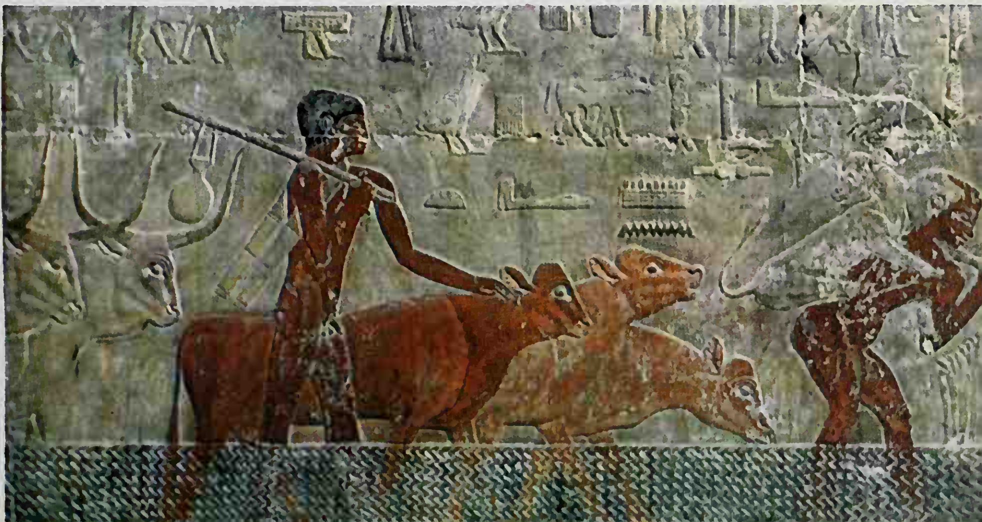
◀ The servants of the relief cycles in the cult chambers later became sculptured figures which accompanied the dead man into the tomb itself, ready to serve him at any moment. This was an attempt by the deceased to free himself from dependence on the death cult, which had apparently become unreliable in ministering to the needs of the dead.

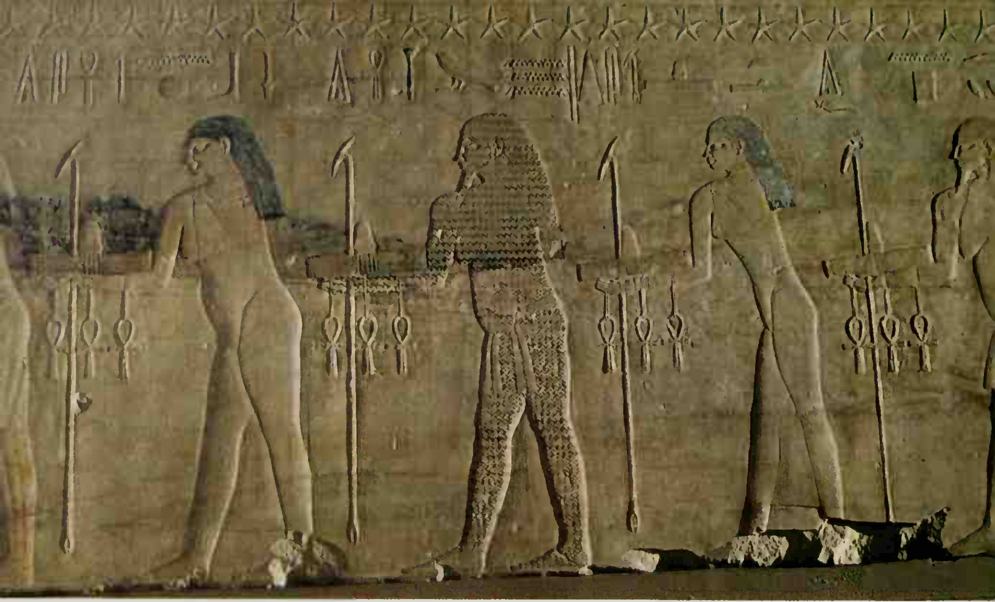
The numerous figures of servants are interesting in showing the ability of the artists to portray people in many different attitudes, thus going beyond the restrictions of traditional portraiture. Besides this brewer, straining the fermenting dough through a basket sieve, there are potters, millers' wives, bakers, musicians, and many others at the service of the deceased.

Paint is an indispensable adjunct to relief and statuary, for only through color can the real essence of what is depicted be brought out (cf. pages 34–35). The treatment of the legs of the men and animals wading through the water shows how well painting and relief can complement each other, while at the same time being able to differentiate essentials. The water is represented by zigzag lines cut into the stone, and thus reproduced in relief like the rest of the scene. On the other hand, the parts below the waterline, showing through the water, are merely painted.

Apart from its masterly technique, this scene affords noteworthy details of content. A kind herdsman has lifted onto his shoulder a frightened calf that is looking round for its mother. The other herdsman seems to be quieting another animal by placing his hand on its neck. This pastoral mood admirably fits the religious notions of the Fifth Dynasty, according to which the sun-god, as a good shepherd, takes care of mankind, his little domestic animals, and as the Great Preserver, makes the plants and the beasts flourish. The observer is torn from this visionary mood all too abruptly, however, when he reads in the hieroglyphs how coarsely the drovers curse each other.

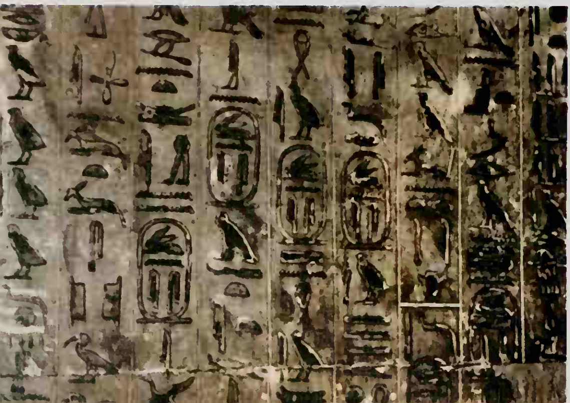
A herd crossing a ford, detail from a relief cycle. Limestone, height of the detail 15″. Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2400 B.C. From the tomb of Ti at Saqqara





Procession of the fertility-gods. Limestone, height c. 27¹/₂″. Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, c. 2450 B.C. From the tomb of King Sahura at Abusir. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Religious texts in the pyramid of King Unas at Saqqara. Limestone, width of detail c. 39″. Old Kingdom, end of Fifth Dynasty, c. 2320 B.C.

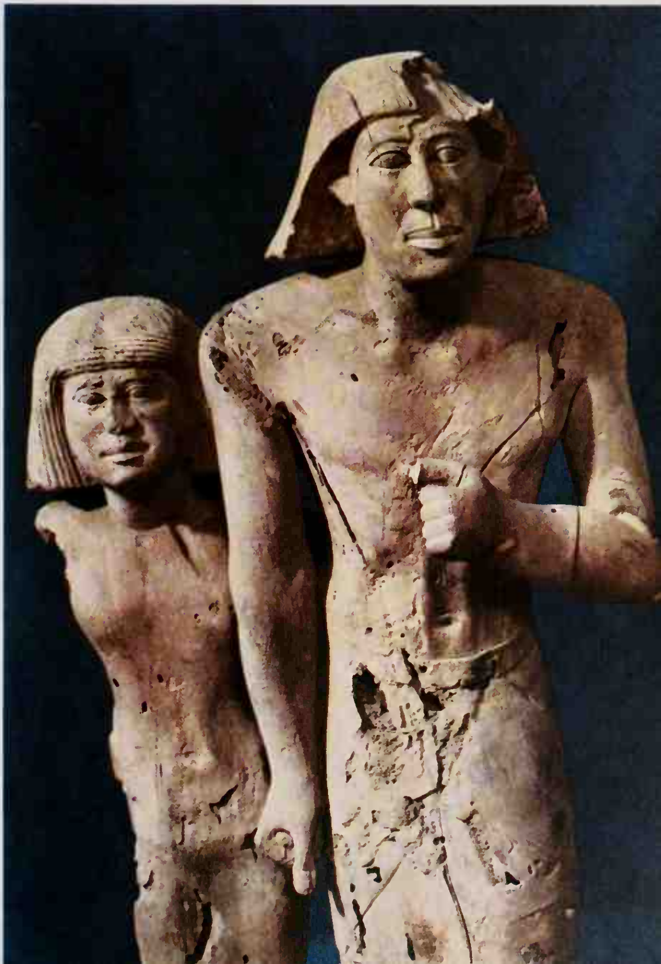


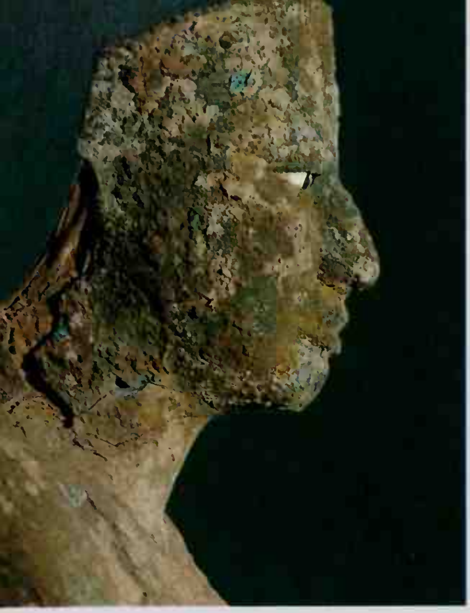
The monumental architecture of the pyramids of Giza (page 42), which have no inscriptions, has preserved the greatness of the Old Kingdom. On the other hand, the smaller pyramids of the declining Old Kingdom, most of which have since fallen into ruins, contain a treasure of a very special kind: religious inscriptions—the so-called Pyramid Texts—which, since the time of Unas, have covered the walls of the passages and chambers within the pyramids, preserving for eternity the burial and resurrection ritual of the funerary rites.

The life-preserving forces flow in a perpetual cycle of give and take. The king, by his ritual and political acts, nourishes the gods and men of Egypt. Conversely, the two halves of the country, the various regions, and several gods appear before the dead king to equip him with the forces needed for his rule in the hereafter. The figures of the sea-god (center) and the corn-god (at the right edge) manifest themselves as personifications of overflowing abundance by virtue of their portliness, their bellies spilling over their belts, and their womanish breasts. The sea-god is covered with watery lines, while the corn-god is sprinkled with seeds of grain.

Married couples, who were originally placed independently side by side (see pages 34, 35), have now been united into a group (see also the relief, page 49). The man, who is portrayed as very tall alongside his dainty wife, is in the established striding posture prescribed for men. His left fist once probably clasped a staff of office, while the scepter rested in his right hand. His wife, standing beside him with her feet together, has pressed so close to him, with one arm about his back and her body turned toward him in a gentle curve, that part of her right side is covered by the man's arm. This uncanonical posture seems to give the figure an added realism.

Married couple. Wood, over-all height 27″. Old Kingdom, probably Fifth Dynasty, c. 2450–2320 B.C. The Louvre, Paris





Head of a life-size statue of King Pepy I. Copper, height of the entire statue 69″. Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2295–2265 B.C. From Nekhen/Hierakonpolis. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

OLD KINGDOM

Sixth to Eighth Dynasties (c. 2320–2135 B.C.)

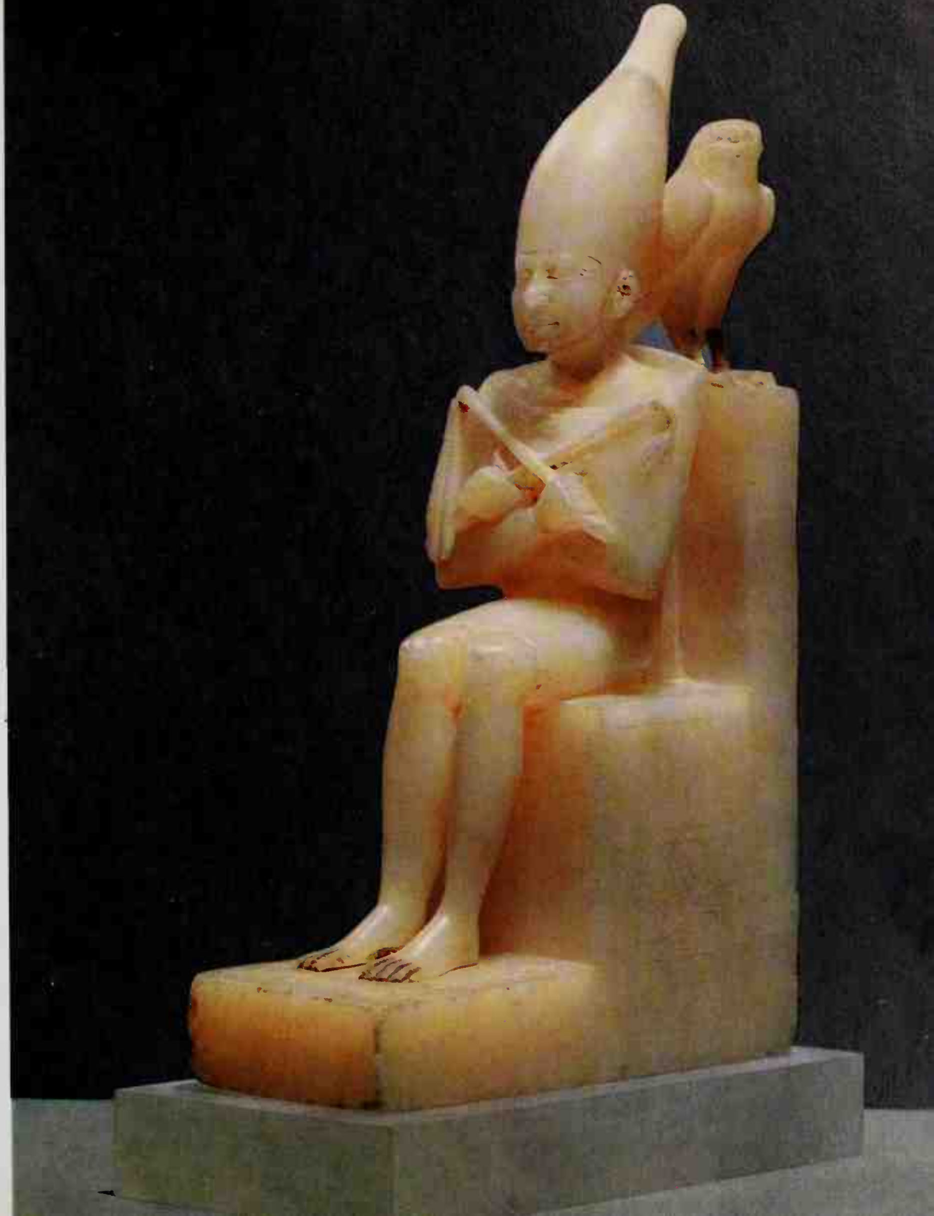
What sets this statue off from the examples we have considered up to now is the unusual material, the effect it produces, and the fact that it was set up in the temple of Hierakonpolis, i.e. outside the tomb. What was desired here was assurance of the presence of the king in the temple, rather than the provision of a realistic substitute body for eternity. The right of communicating with his celestial forebears was reserved to him, as the chief priest; yet he clearly had to delegate this high office to the priests, if the cult was to be maintained in all of his country's temples: it was the priest who took the king's place in front of the image of the god.

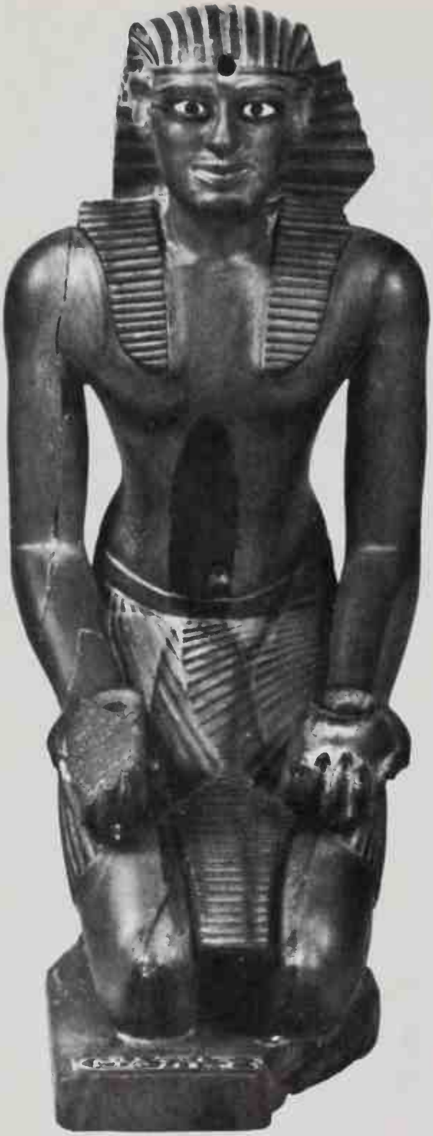
The radiance emanating from the copper figure, which was further enhanced by inlaid gems and gold leaf, must have had the same effect as the "Son of the Sun" himself when he made his appearance. The statue consists of separate parts, hammered or cast, riveted together on wood. Its fascination persists today in spite of its severe oxidation.

Wrapped in the knee-length cloak of the Festival of Renewal, the king is seated on a throne carved in the shape of a cube (the hieroglyph for the goddess Isis). He wears the crown of Upper Egypt and holds the whip and crozier crossed over his chest in his hands, which are also crossed (in later times Osiris is often portrayed in similar garb and in a similar posture as the image of the dead king-become-a-god). A hawk is perched on the back of the throne, at right angles to the king and thus seemingly almost uninvolved. This statue has often been compared with the very similar seated figure of Chephren (pages 40–41), and it has been regarded as the artistic expression of the fact that the god-king of former times has been degraded to a son of the deity, while the distance between the two has increased enormously: the god has become transcendental, while the king is on the way to becoming a human being again.

However, since Chephren is depicted as king of the hereafter, and since the same may also be true of Pepy, in view of his garb and posture (see page 69), these two statues furnish us no information about the change in the relationship of the god of the world and the living king. The comparison is instructive, however, if the king is regarded as ruler of the hereafter (= Osiris) in both cases, constituting with his consort Isis (the throne seat) and his son Horus (the hawk) the principal triad in the history of Egyptian religion.

Statuette of King Pepy I. Alabaster, height 10$^{1}/_{4}$″. Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2295–2265 B.C. Probably from Saqqara. Brooklyn Museum, New York



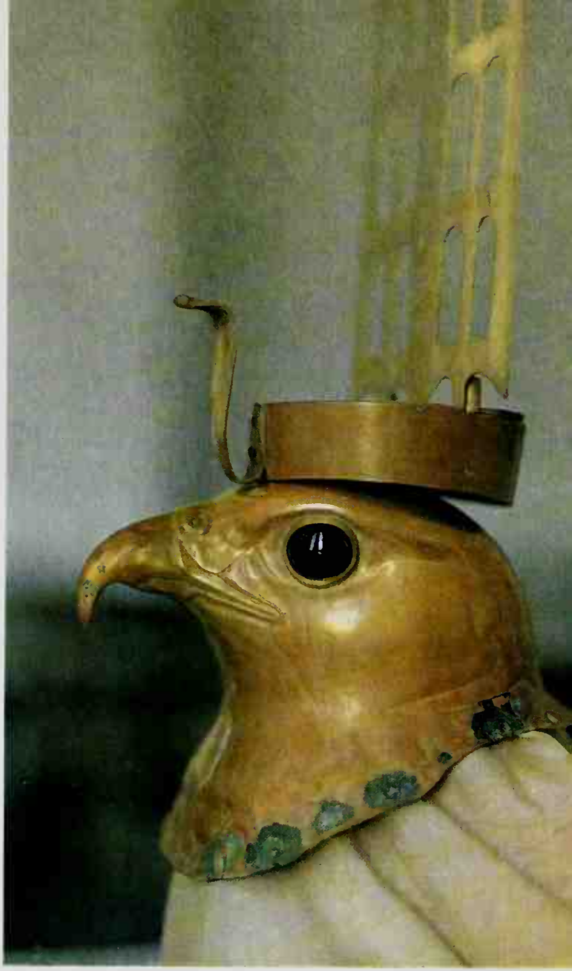


King Pepy I. Green schist, height $5^{7}/_{8}$". Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2295–2265 B.C. Presumably from Saqqara. Brooklyn Museum, New York

Though there is doubt as to whether we can draw any inferences regarding the change in the relationship of god to king from the seated statue of the same king (page 59), this schist statuette is proof positive that the diminution in the status of the king that had occurred in actual political fact had also found expression in art. Henceforth, we shall often encounter the Egyptian kings kneeling before their gods in this humble attitude, with votive vases in their hands.

The king is distinguished from his fellow countrymen by his garb, to be sure, but hardly any longer by his posture and attitude toward the gods (cf. page 26). Originally the uraeus snake, the king's protective goddess, coiled upward from the hole in his forehead. The figure has been carved out of the solid stone, and the artist's greater sureness in handling this material has allowed him to dispense with a rear pillar or supporting stay, so that the figure appears to be free in space, thus achieving an extremely lifelike expression.

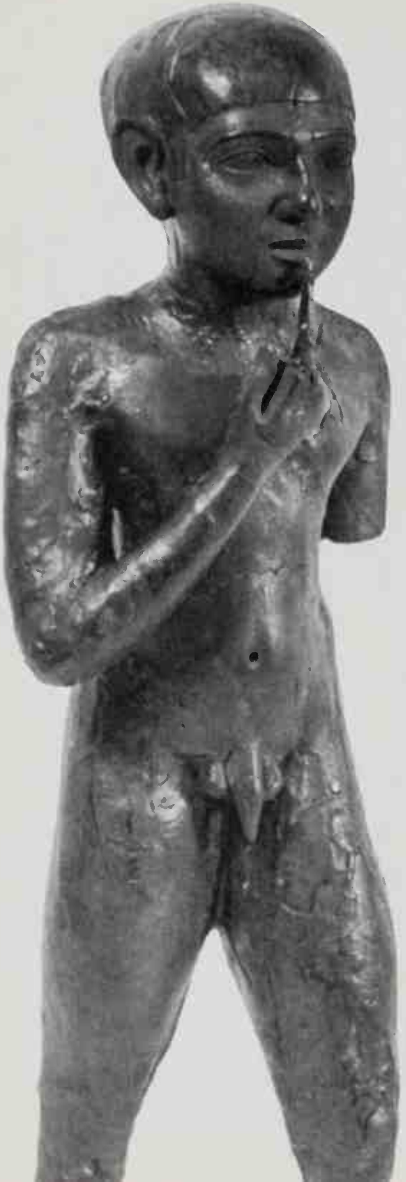
Head of a hawk. Gold, height of the head $3^7/_8$", height with the feathers c. 14". Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2295–2265 B.C. From Nekhen (Hierakonpolis). Egyptian Museum, Cairo



In the temple of Hierakonpolis ("City of Hawks"), where the Narmer palette was also found, there stood on a pole-like support an image of the hawk-god, who was worshiped in the country of the kings who unified the kingdom, and who was subsequently elevated to the status of Horus, the god of the state. In front of the hawk, and reaching almost up to its beak, there stood a statuette of the king (cf. page 216), representing the earthly Horus under the protection of Horus, god of the world.

The body of the hawk was probably carved in wood; it was crowned by the noble head of the majestic bird, hammered in pure gold. The sharp beak and the piercing eyes, made of obsidian, give the hawk-god a royal dignity, which is formally confirmed, though hardly reinforced, by the crown with the uraeus snake and the two high feathers.

In mythology, the eyes of Horus play the roles of sun and moon. The injury or theft of an eye by Seth, his hostile brother, was assumed to be the cause of the waning of the moon and the setting of the sun. The healing or recovery of the eye, on the other hand, signified the victory of light over darkness. That is why the Horus-eye became a favorite amulet and a symbol that was constantly employed, for it guaranteed the ever-recurring triumph of life over downfall and death.



Statuette of a boy. Wood, height 18½". Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2320–2250 B.C. From Giza. Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, California

The wooden figure of a boy, obviously the son of the lord of the tomb, stood in the coffin chamber of a tomb in Giza. The son was obliged to perform the rites of the death cult for his father, providing him with food, drink, and the furnishings for the house of the dead. Placing his son in the tomb gave the dead man the assurance that he would continue to live on through him and in him.

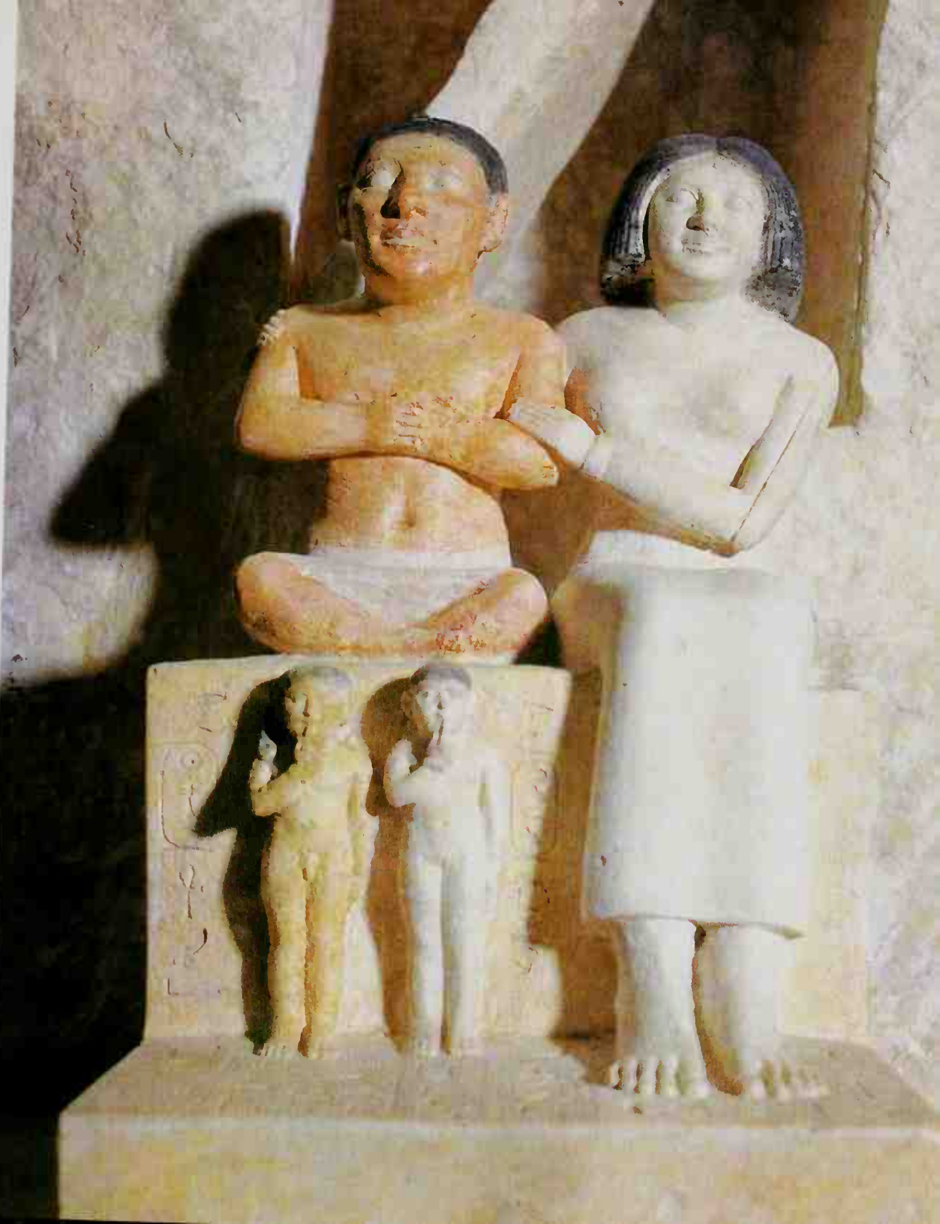
The finger placed against the lips is the hieroglyphic sign for "child," even though the children sometimes are given the physique and facial features of adults.

The dwarf Seneb had risen to high office: he headed the court weaving mill and was the priest of the dead for Kings Cheops and Radedef. His wife was a member of the royal house. He was not ashamed to have his physical peculiarities portrayed, for comical little creatures like himself were admired as marvels at court.

Nevertheless, the artist tried to balance out the disproportion between the dwarf husband and his normal wife by enthroning him in full dignity. In place of the father's short legs, which are cleverly concealed by being crossed, there are the two children, naked, with their fingers to their lips. The whole group was enclosed in a stone casket.

▶

The court dwarf Seneb and his family. Limestone, height 13". Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2320–2250 B.C. From Giza. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

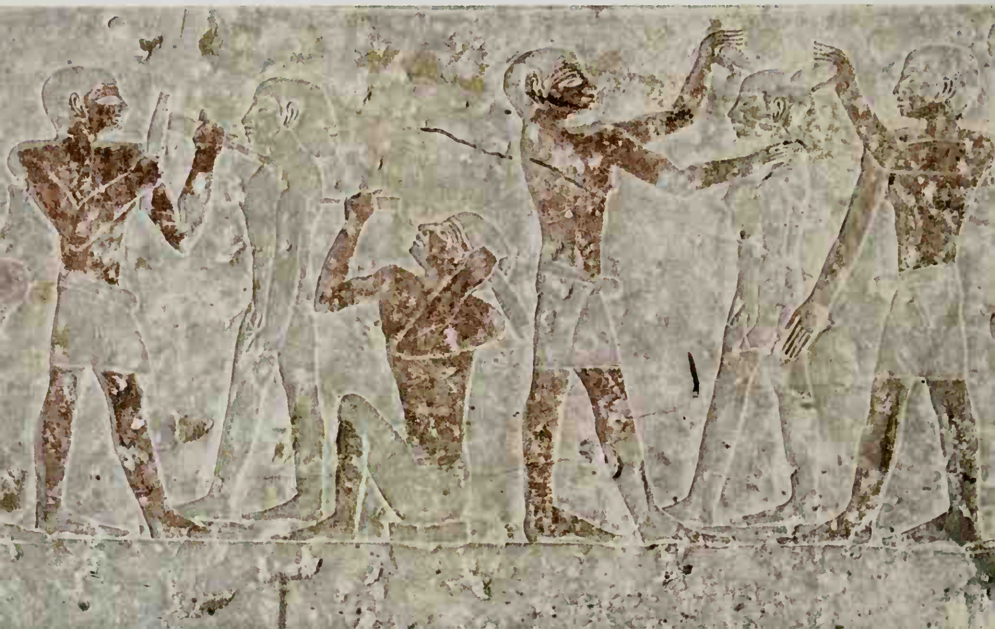


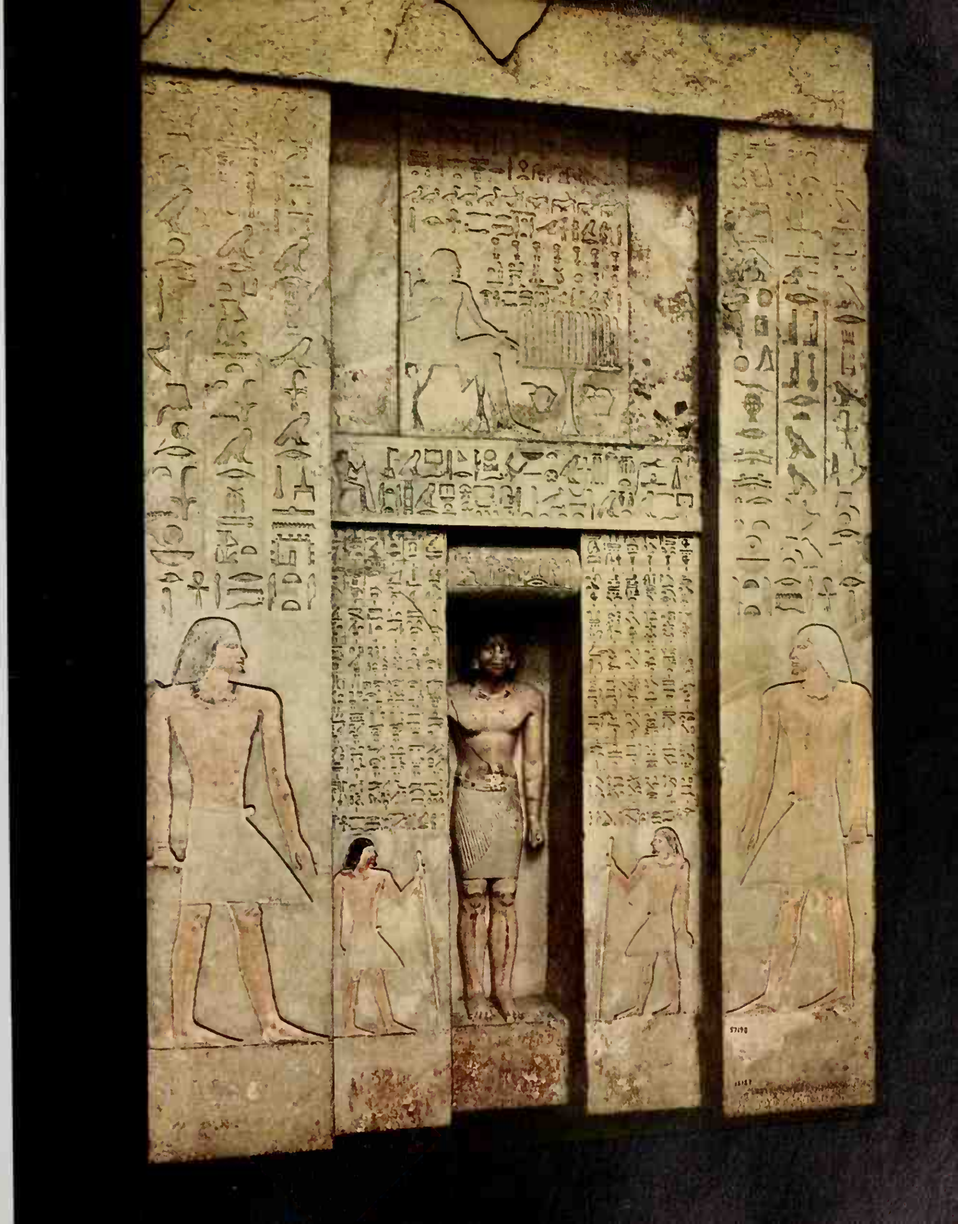
The deceased in a false door. Limestone, height c. 8′. Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2300 B.C. From Iteti's tomb at Saqqara. ▶
Egyptian Museum, Cairo

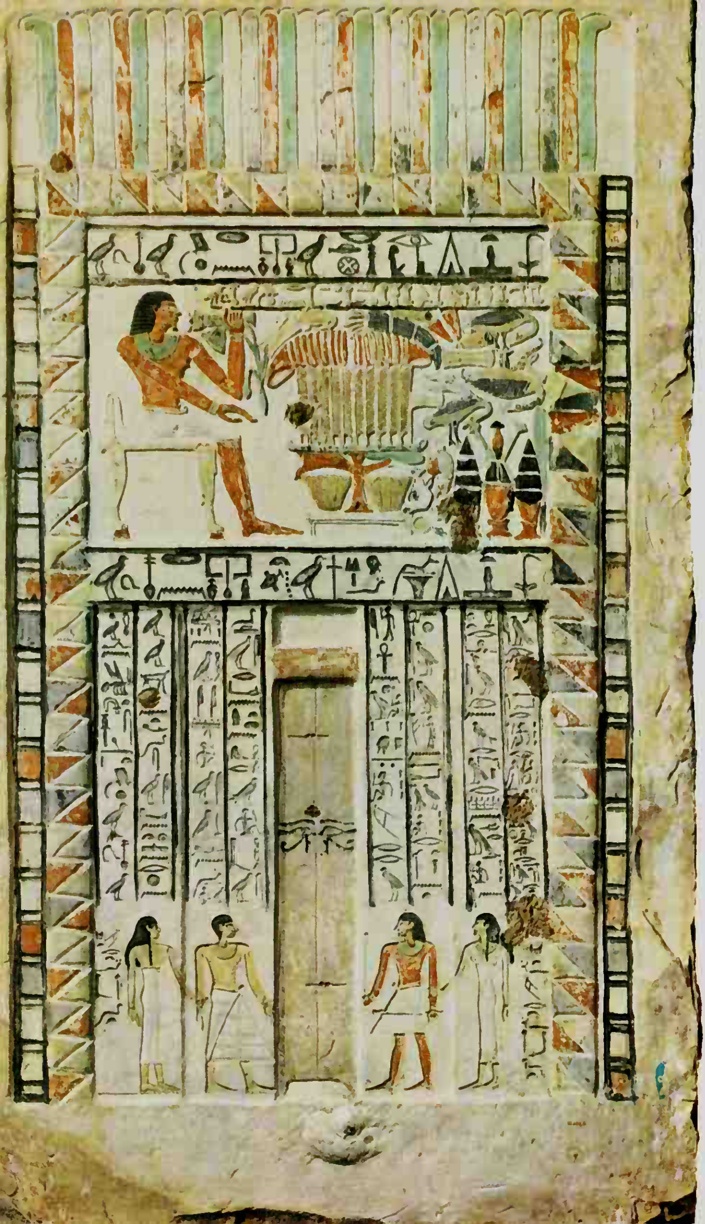
Providing the dead with foodstuffs to preserve their vitality is central to the cult of the dead. The false door through which the deceased passes from the hereafter to the here-and-now, which connects him with the realm of the living, becomes the actual center of the tomb. Here is where the dead man receives the offerings. Surrounding the door are the text of the offertory, the enumeration of the foodstuffs in an "offering list," and portraits of the dead man, in particular, one showing him at table consuming the gifts.

Two teams of sculptors are working on statues mounted on their bases, nearly life-size and still unclothed and unpainted. At the left they are using mallets and chisels; at the right, polishing stones.

Tomb relief of sculptors working on statues. Limestone, Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty, c. 2320–2250 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

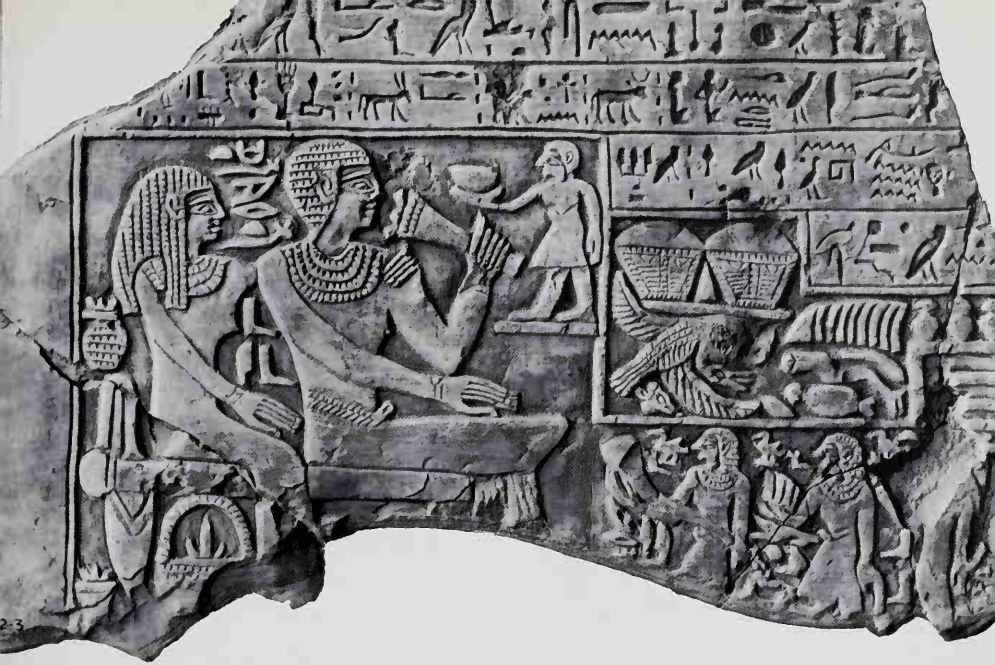






Funerary stele of Neferu. Limestone, height 45⁵/₈". End of the Old Kingdom, presumably Eighth Dynasty, c. 2160–2135 B.C. From the region of Denderah. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Wadji's stele (page 28) was a representation of the structure of the world, whereas this stele represents Neferu's sepulcher, or rather the most important part of it—the wall with the false door (cf. page 65). The deceased does not pass through the door in his complete form, but gazes with his Horus-eyes into the world of the living, in the manner of the king himself in his divine transfiguration. Alongside the false door there stands the lord of the tomb with his wife, evidently represented at two stages of his life in the hereafter. These are denoted here by a differentiation in the color of his skin, as well as by different wigs, aprons, and staff or scepter attributes. At the top of the stele, above the dining-table scene, is a hollow molding of palm fronds, which was employed in architecture to symbolize the vault of heaven, thus emphasizing the structural character of the stele. The execution of the figures at the bottom is typical of the provincial style of the First Intermediate period.



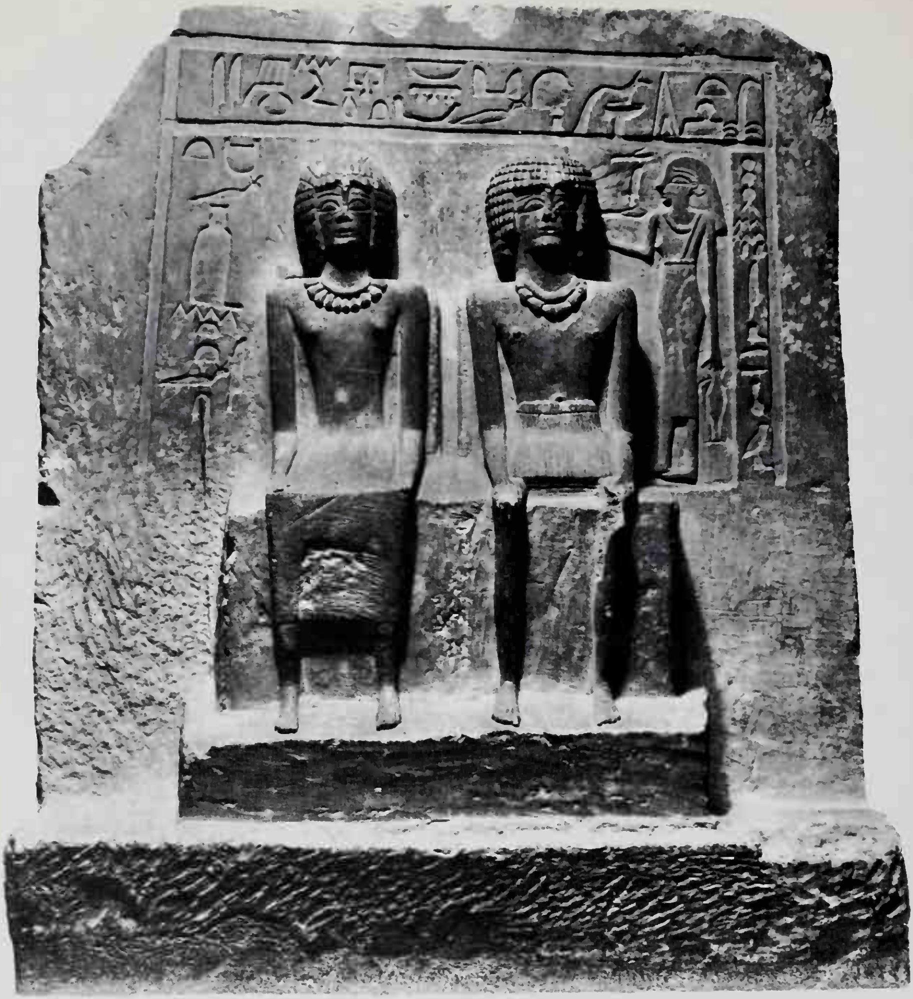
Funerary stele. Limestone, width 24³/₄″. First Intermediate period, c. 2135–2040 B.C. From Denderah. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh

FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

Ninth to Eleventh Dynasties (c. 2135–2040 B.C.)

With the decline of royal power at the end of the Old Kingdom, artistic form disintegrated together with orderly administration. The court of Memphis was supplanted as patron of the arts by the aspiring nomarchs, who became independent princes. The artist-craftsmen in the provinces tried to continue the motifs of the capital, but their technique was merely provincial. Proportions are no longer exact; the eyes of the married couple at the offering table and those of their son standing before them are enormous; hands are uncouth, despite the exaggerated slenderness of the fingers; the noses of the sons bringing offerings are coarsely enlarged; the hieroglyphs and their arrangement have become clumsy and disordered.

The crudeness of the provincial artists is even more manifest in sculpture, which takes on grotesque forms (see page 68). The limestone group of the married couple has all of the functional features of classical funerary sculpture (and thus doubtless achieved the same ritual effect as the masterpieces in the capital), but the sure feeling of the artist for order, measure, and beauty is totally absent.



Funerary stele of Henenu and his wife. Limestone, height 18⅞″. First Intermediate period, c. 2135–2040 B.C. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

MIDDLE KINGDOM

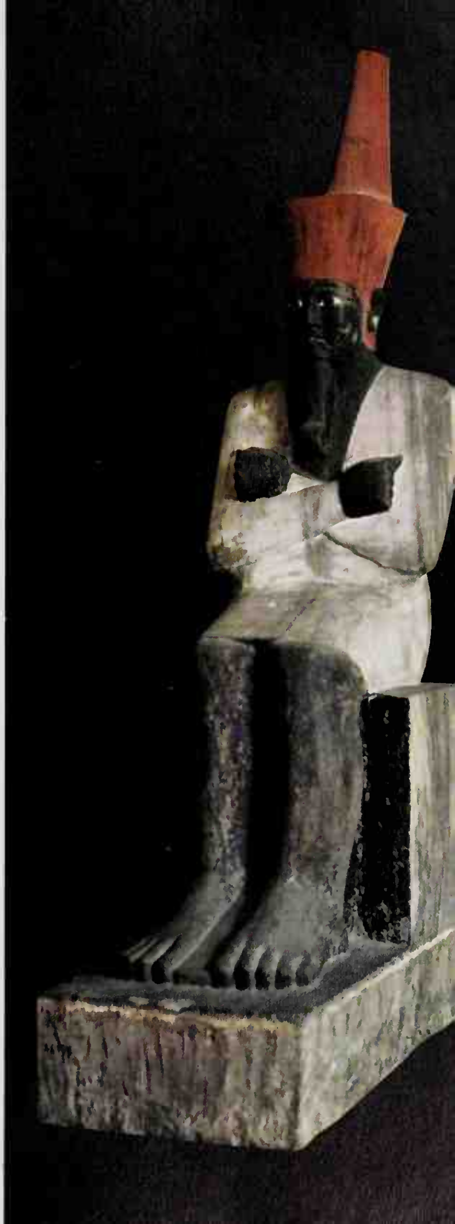
Eleventh to Thirteenth Dynasties (c. 2040–1650 B.C.)

After the disintegration of the state that began at the end of the Old Kingdom, and the troubles of the period of political paralysis known as the "First Intermediate period," Egypt was once again united into a single state, and once again it was Upper Egypt that achieved this reunification. The Theban Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep subjugated the North and made himself king of Upper and Lower Egypt (he was the second Theban prince called Mentuhotep, but the first king of all Egypt after the reunification of the kingdom, so that he is sometimes called Mentuhotep I and sometimes Mentuhotep II).

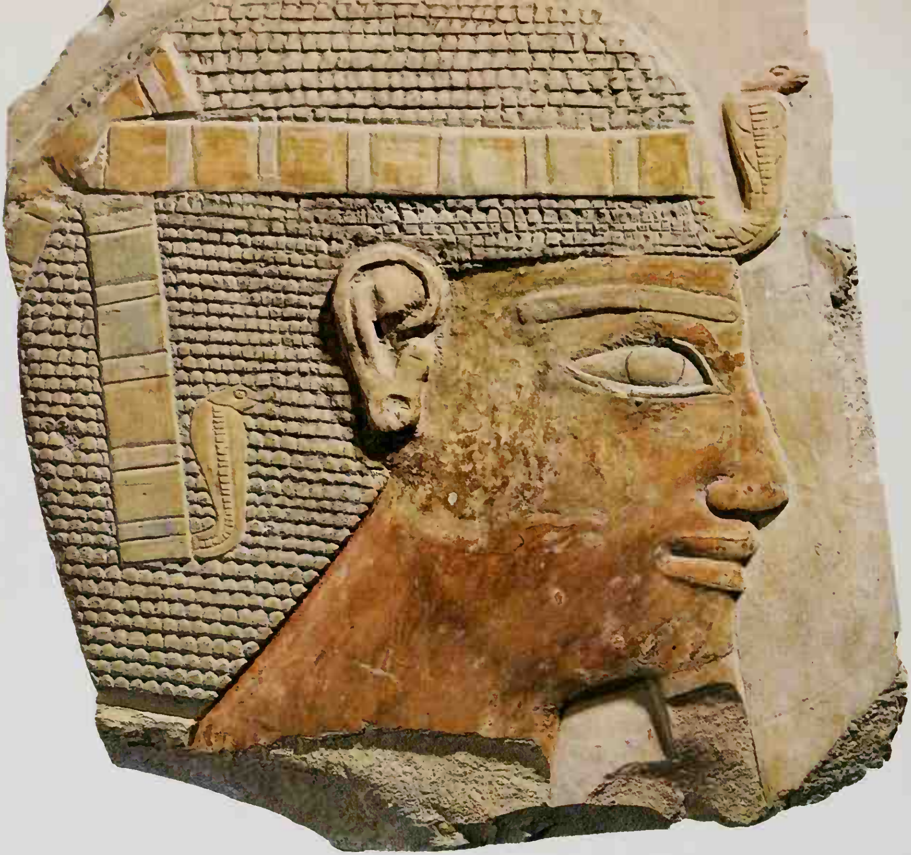
All the rude ferocity of this strong and imperious personality is expressed in his funerary statue, in which his energy seems to be subdued with difficulty while it prepares for a new and violent explosion. After the political and artistic chaos of the First Intermediate period, order, proportion, and security prevailed in all fields. The Old Kingdom, which was regarded as exemplary, became the ideal.

Massive, like the sculpture of the dawn of history, the dead king is portrayed with all the symbols of the eternal, continually renewed kingdom. He wears the white cloak of the Festival of Renewal; he crosses his arms over his chest like Osiris (cf. page 59); and like Osiris, his skin is painted black (which is to be taken here as the color of resurrection, rather than as an indication of his race). The red crown of Lower Egypt may be regarded as a political symbol, indicating that the dominion over Lower Egypt has been re-established. It may also involve religious symbolism, however, pointing to Lower Egypt as the country where the sun goes down and where, according to the myth, Osiris met his death (cf. page 85).

The image of the king was wrapped in mummy bandages and interred in a shaft of the tomb.



King Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep. Sandstone, height 72". Middle Kingdom, c. 2040–2010 B.C. From his funerary temple in Deir el Bahari. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



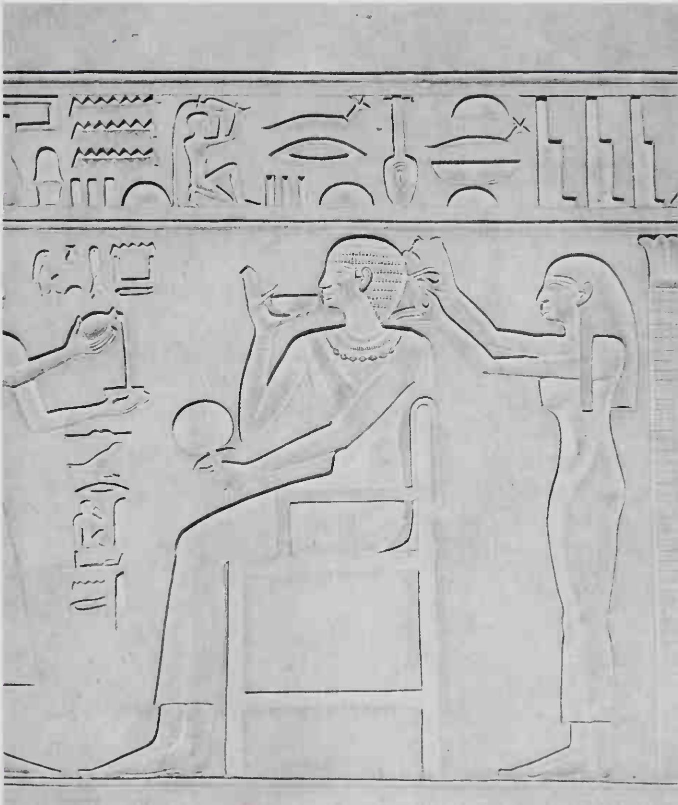
King Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep, fragment of a relief in his funerary temple. Limestone, 14¹/₈ × 13″. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2040–2010 B.C. From Deir el Bahari. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh

The curly wig, worked in the finest detail, and the diadem with papyrus umbels are part of a special costume for hunting in papyrus thickets. As distinct from private individuals, the king wears the uraeus snake on his diadem as the emblem of his royal status. The face looks as if it were made up of hieroglyphs: the nose, mouth, eye, and somewhat too small ear seem each to have a separate existence as parts of the body, without being subordinated to the whole. This kind of portrayal is typical of the initial stages of artistic periods (cf. page 17). Within the tomb of King Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep, the sarcophaguses of the ladies of his harem were placed in shaft graves. The relief cycles formerly placed in the ritual chambers above ground, which portrayed the deceased and his entourage of servitors for eternity, moved later to the walls of the underground sarcophagus chambers and finally to the sides of the coffin itself. Apparently, bitter experiences of the unreliability of the cult of the dead led people to wish to be independent of the services of the living and to exercise control of the funerary foundation themselves from the coffin. The scenes, now within reach of the deceased, were thus subject to his direct influence.

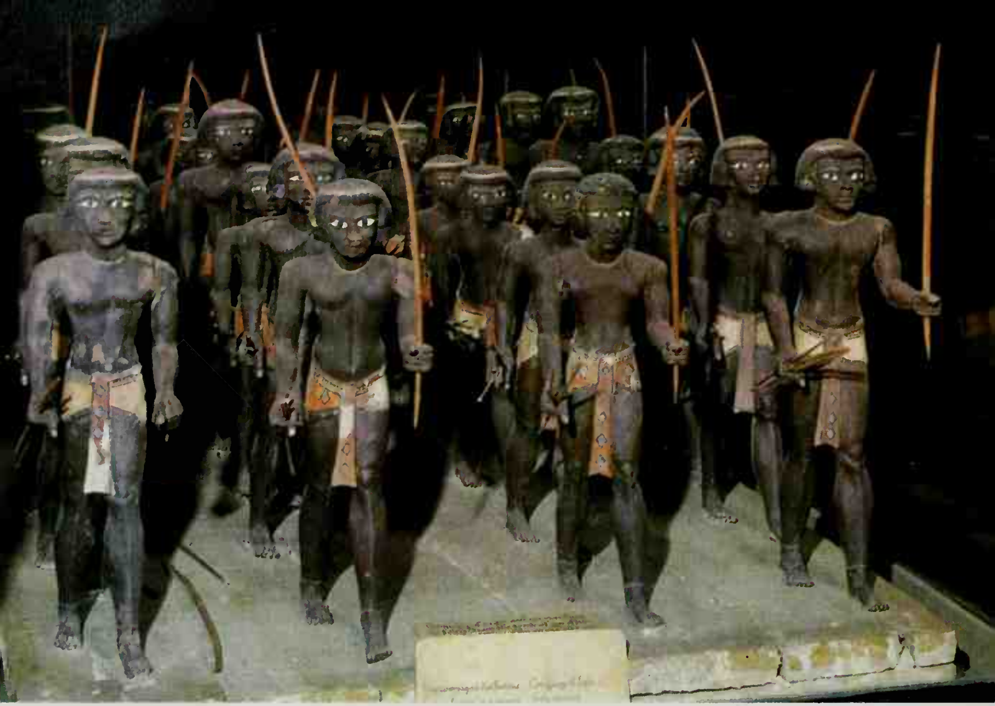
The princess, seated on a chair, wearing a collar and bone rings, is having her hair done by a servant, who is arranging her curls with a needle. The lady holds a mirror in her left hand, while her other hand brings a bowl to her lips. A servant standing in front of her fills the bowl and offers it to her with the words, "For your vital strength, my lady!"

An everyday scene of daily life is what one would term this at first glance. But the Egyptians apparently felt a need to veil the expression of their innermost desires, the workings of their elemental life forces, behind harmless and inoffensive pictures; and they did so with taste and artistry. We know from pictures of the delivery room and from love songs that a woman's personal hygiene was an indispensable prerequisite for expected motherhood as confirmation of her life-giving power. Thus, the interpretation of this scene is that here the king's favorite endeavors to maintain, beyond the grave, her role as the beloved of the "god" and mother of his heir.

The incised relief emphasizes the outlines, demonstrating the return to the previous artistic order after the shapelessness of the figures in the First Intermediate period. Within the outlines, the design is strong, modeled almost corporeally. Only in the crude facial features and the excessively slender fingers are vestiges of the style of the First Intermediate period still to be found (cf. page 67).



Princess Kawit at her toilet. Limestone relief on her sarcophagus. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2040–2010 B.C. From Deir el Bahari. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Model of a troop of Nubian mercenaries. Wood, height c. 15$^3/_4$". Beginning of the Middle Kingdom, c. 2040 B.C. From the tomb of Mesehty at Assiut. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The state of civil war after the collapse of the political order of the Old Kingdom is recalled by this view of the well-equipped troop of Nubian archers, marching in column of fours, which Mesehty, the nomarch of Assiut placed in his tomb in company strength of forty men. A lament of that time describes the prevailing insecurity: "Arrows are made of metal in order to beg bread by blood." The nomarchs had actually used their local militia and mercenaries to ensure the provision of food for their subjects at the expense of their weaker neighbors.

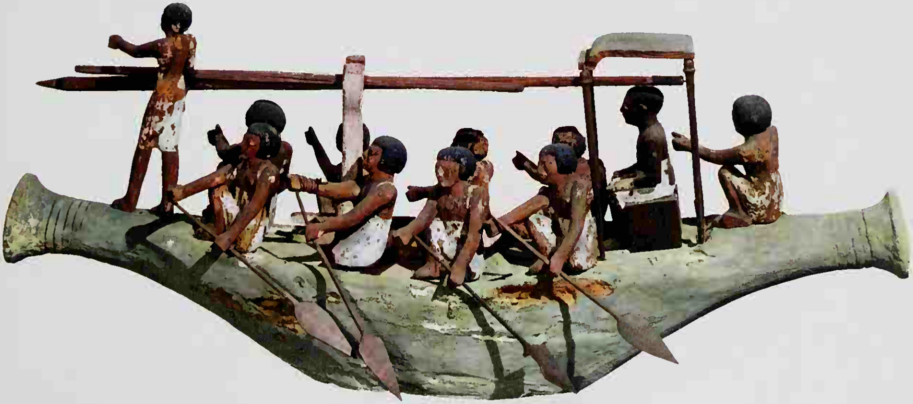
The Theban prince Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep used similar troops to re-establish law and order in the country and to reunite the two kingdoms of Egypt. The Nubian mercenaries, who today are still the elite troops of the Egyptian army, have been employed as reliable, brave, and disciplined troops to maintain order throughout Egyptian history.

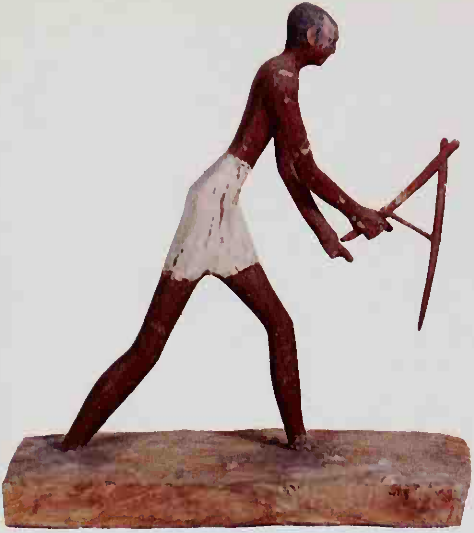
The wooden models of the Middle Kingdom are the descendants of the clay figures of servants which were placed in the tomb to provide the deceased with a permanent army of spirit servitors (see page 54). This world of the dead, which looks like a toy display, provides us with valuable details of life in ancient Egypt. As in the Old Kingdom figures of servants, the value of these models lies mostly in the realm of the history of civilization; from an artistic point of view, they are merely more or less successful examples of craftsmanship.

The ship, actually a barge, is made of papyrus stalks tied together at the bow and stern. The mast has been lowered, indicating that the voyage is downstream, northward. The pilot standing at the bow guides the ship through the shallows of the Nile, giving the course to the helmsman at the stern. There are two rows of four oarsmen, each with a paddle oar. The lord of the tomb sits in the canonical position beneath a canopy that shields him from the rays of the sun.

This may be a representation of some actual event, re-created for eternity: perhaps an official voyage for the king or a private trip to visit and inspect his own estates. Other ship models bear the deceased on a bier, indicating that they are en route to the holy places which the death cult requires to be visited. Such models either preserve forever an actual ritual voyage, or else take the place of a voyage that never really occurred.

Model of a ship. Wood, length c. 40″. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2040–1990 B.C. From the tomb of Meket-ra in Deir el Bahari. Egyptian Museum, Cairo





Laborer with a hoe. Wood, height 9½″. Late Old Kingdom, end of third millennium B.C. From a tomb in Meir. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The laborer with the hoe still belongs to the end of the Old Kingdom. However, the use of wood (instead of limestone) as material leads straight on to the servant figures of the Middle Kingdom.

Exhibiting cattle. Wood, base length 68″. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2040–1990 B.C. From the tomb of Meket-ra in Deir el Bahari. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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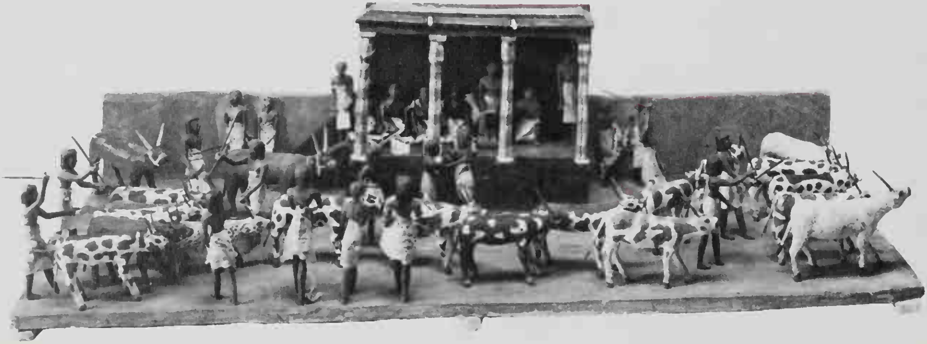
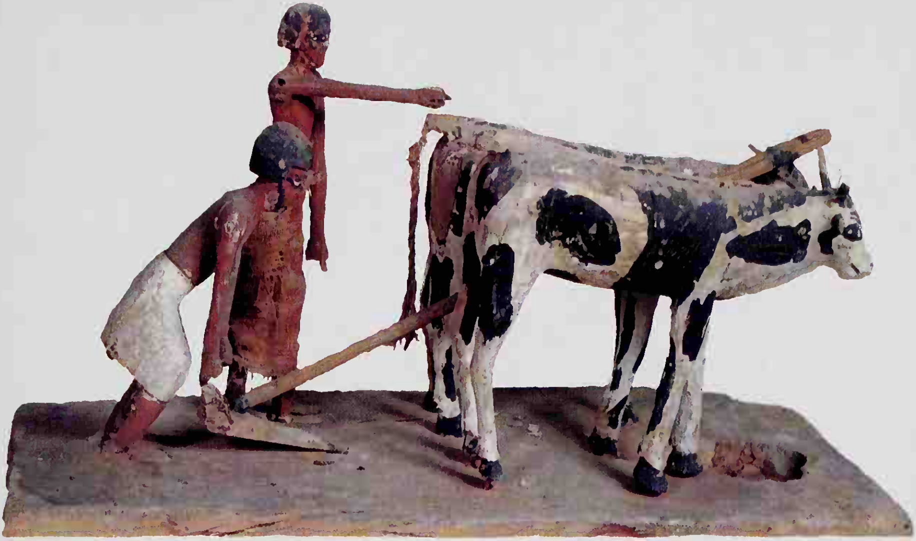
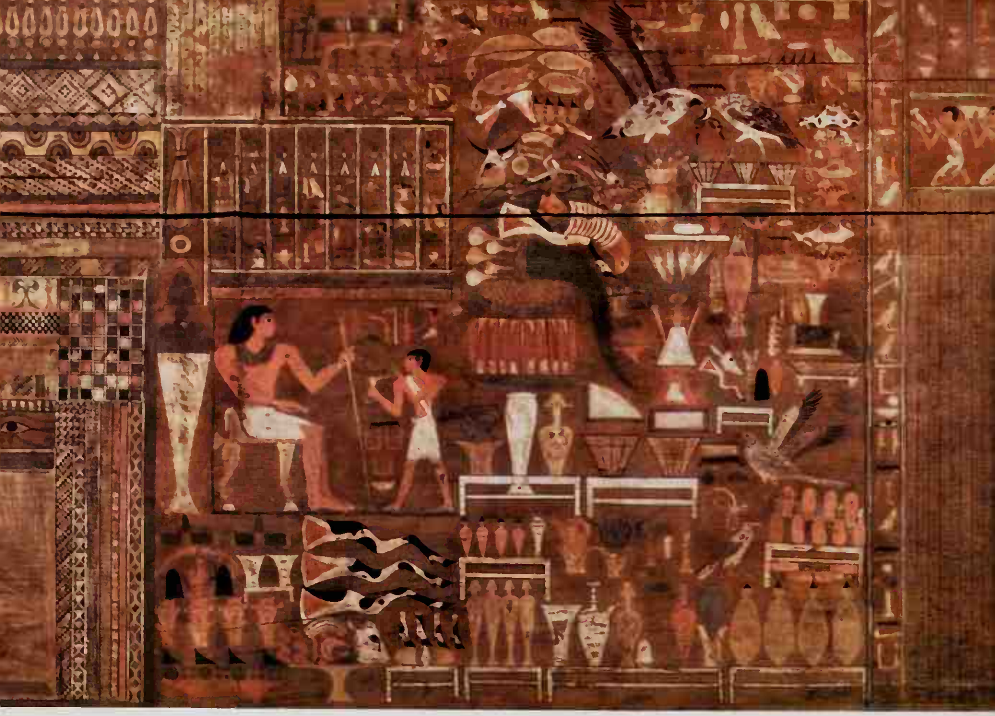




Farm workers plowing and sowing. Wood, length c. 20″. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh–Twelfth Dynasties, c. 2000 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Numerous wooden models found as funerary offerings deal with agricultural themes, for agriculture, as the economic basis for providing the dead with food, played a prominent part in thinking about the afterlife. The relief cycles of the Old Kingdom mastabas presented numerous variants of this favorite theme (cf. page 55), and showed the lord of the tomb inspecting the goods that had been contributed to the death cult, and which were to cover his requirements in the hereafter.

Cultivation of the fields began with the preparation of the Nile silt soil, which was either broken up with a hoe or furrowed by an ox-drawn plow in readiness for the seed. Besides the many kinds of bread provided for the dead, meat offerings formed an important part of the cult. This relied on successful animal husbandry, particularly on cattle breeding. The dead man (facing page), now supervising the instructions for the offerings he had issued while alive, is seated in an arborlike hall, supported by papyrus columns, and is accompanied by his son as the actual executor of the cult of the dead (cf. page 62). Four scribes record the exhibited cattle—black, red, spotted, and brindled. The next act, which was also found in the same tomb as a model, took place in the slaughterhouse.



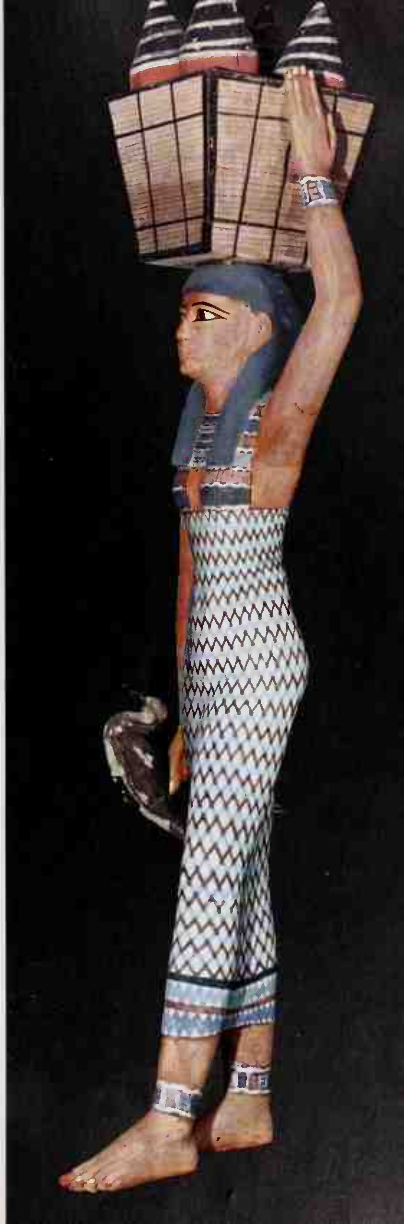
Detail of the painted wooden coffin of the nomarch Djehuty-nekht. Cedar, size of the detail c. 25½ × 37½". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1850 B.C. From Deir el Bersheh. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

We have already seen on page 71 how the several elements of the tomb are now concentrated on the coffin itself. The two eyes with which the deceased (identified with Horus, the god of light) hopes to be able to see into the land of the living, appear on the ornamental false door in its typical niche, only part of which is visible to the left of the photograph (cf. pages 65, 66). The scene of the dead man seated at his dining table, which is placed above the false door in tomb architecture, is depicted to one side on the coffin. Between the dead man and his offering table there stands a priest of the dead, burning incense and saying: "For your vital forces." Above the dead man, the beginning of the offertory is recorded as a litany: each column is dedicated to a god or pair of gods. Other offerings are heaped up around the dead man: vases, some of them on stands, with consecrated oil, water, or drinks; legs of beef; the head, ribs, and heart of an ox; roast geese and other poultry; bread, fruit, vegetables, and flowers; and finally some of the dead man's household effects.

All of these details are disordered; in fact, there seems to be a deliberate absence of order. A similar renunciation of orderly principles is seen in the absence of outlines, as in the figures of the lord of the tomb and of the priest with his censer. Yet the artist was evidently able to handle this unacademic style of painting, for he has painted the figures directly on the wood with supreme confidence. Unusual details, such as the darker color of the rear leg of the lord of the tomb and the pointillist plumage of the dove (at the right edge of the panel) prove that this was done by an extraordinary artist.

If, in the royal examples, it was the gods themselves or the personifications of the districts or donor estates that presented the dead ruler with the tomb's abundance (cf. page 56), then this picture on the wall of the tomb of an Old Kingdom dignitary has been reduced to a procession of persons bearing offerings, whose inscriptions indicate that they are personifications of the estates that were to supply provisions for the hereafter.

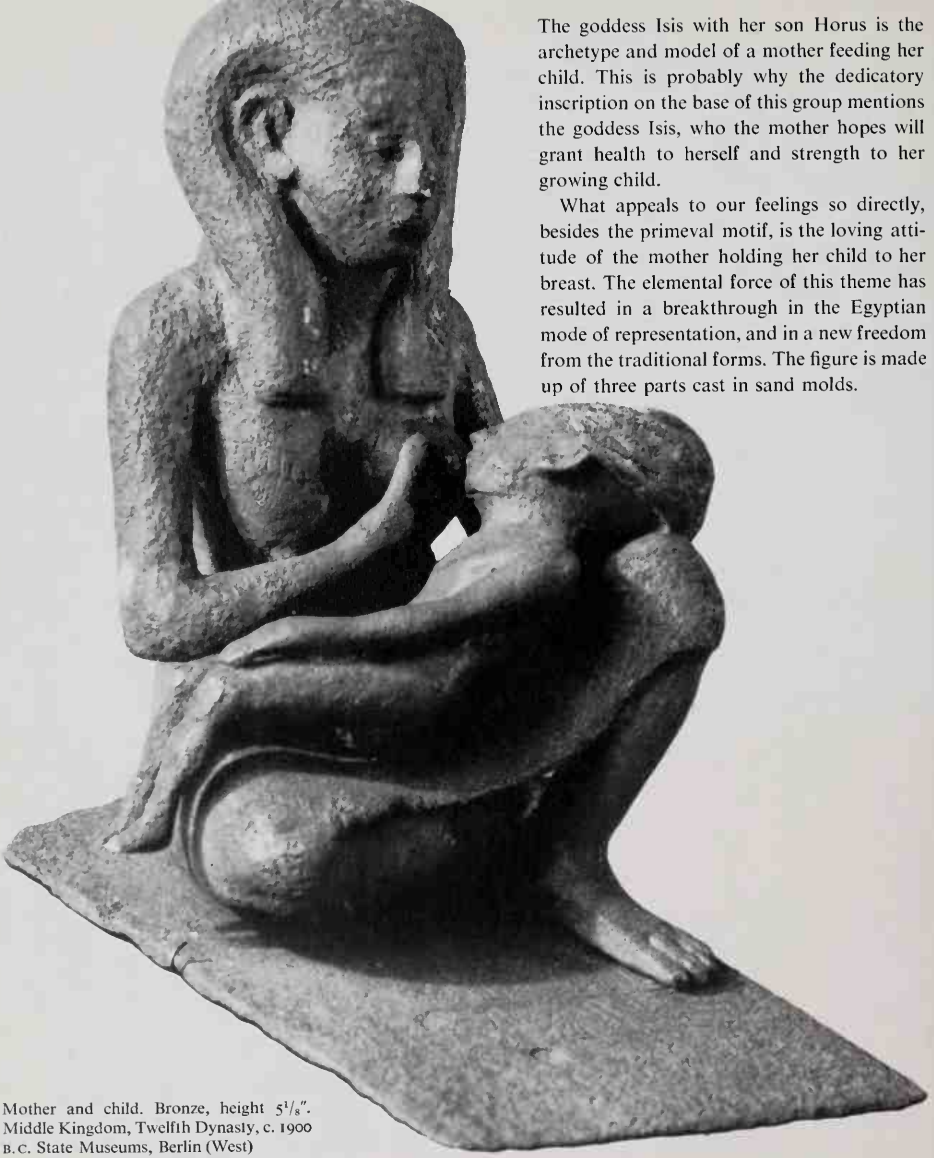
The wooden model of such a female figure bearing offerings suggests by her colorful dress, over which a network of strung pearls is laid, by her necklaces, her bone rings, and last but not least, by the graceful posture of her slim figure, that she is probably an idealized figure—a personification of the donor estate bringing its offerings—rather than simply a female servant bringing a basket with four vases and a duck. Furthermore, the fact that members of the family gladly play the role of offering-bringers in such scenes, both in relief and in painting, raises this figure above those of common servants.



Woman bearing offerings. Wood, height 48″. Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2040–1990 B.C. From the tomb of Meket-ra in Deir el Bahari. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

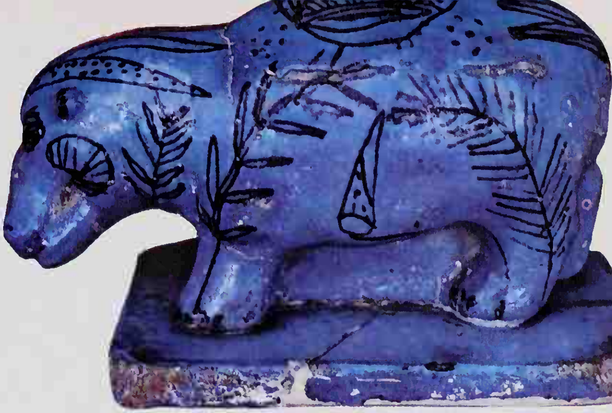
The goddess Isis with her son Horus is the archetype and model of a mother feeding her child. This is probably why the dedicatory inscription on the base of this group mentions the goddess Isis, who the mother hopes will grant health to herself and strength to her growing child.

What appeals to our feelings so directly, besides the primeval motif, is the loving attitude of the mother holding her child to her breast. The elemental force of this theme has resulted in a breakthrough in the Egyptian mode of representation, and in a new freedom from the traditional forms. The figure is made up of three parts cast in sand molds.



Mother and child. Bronze, height $5^1/_8$". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1900 B.C. State Museums, Berlin (West)

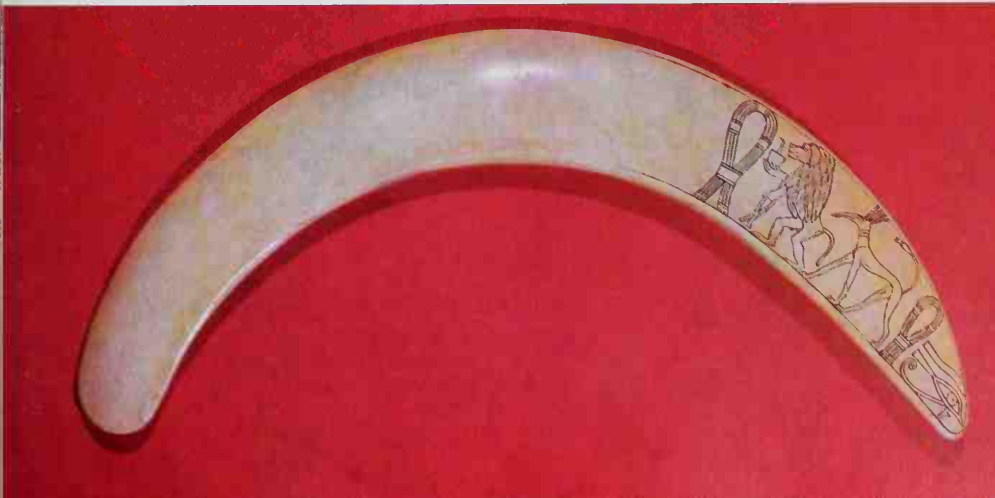
Hippopotamus statuette. Blue faïence, length 5½", height 3½". Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, c. 2100 B.C. From Thebes. The Louvre, Paris



Surrounded by the marsh plants of its habitat, which are painted on the animal's body, the hippopotamus was placed in the tomb with the corpse. If it is to be assigned a ritual importance associated with the tomb, the goddess Thueris, who assists in delivery as a divine midwife, might be suggested. It may thus perhaps be associated with the hoped-for rebirth of the deceased.

The protective amulet made of hippopotamus bone, which was probably laid across the newborn infant's abdomen during the night or while its mother or wet nurse was away, points to the delivery room, in which both mother and child had to be kept out of the clutches of demons. By analogy with the fate of the young sun-god, who escapes all persecution with the aid of numerous divine powers, the newborn infant is identified with the sun-child, and the divine helpers are placed at the service of the earthly child. The Horus-eye, two protective loops, the god Seth (consort of the hippopotamus-goddess), who can not be definitely identified zoologically, and the baboon-god Thoth, who carries a torch as the symbol of light, are depicted on the amulet as apotropaic symbols.

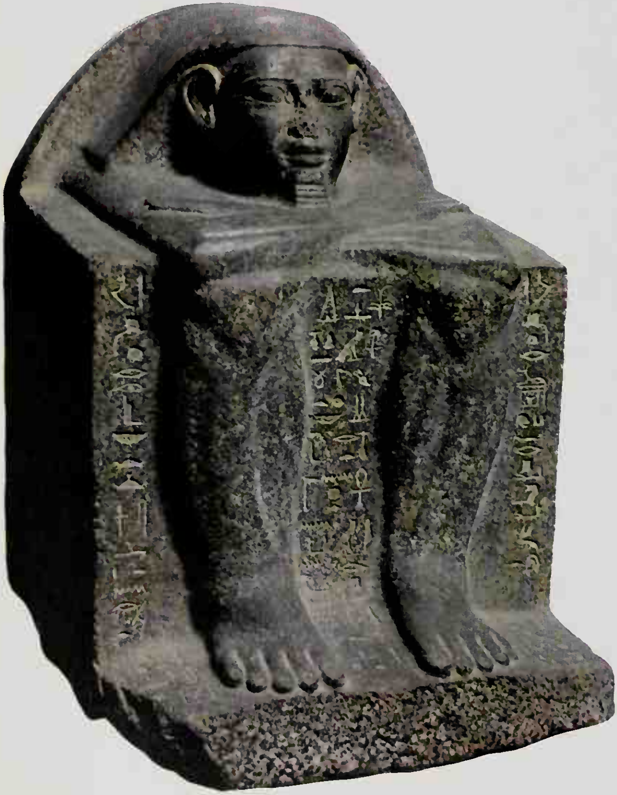
Protective amulet *(apotropaion)* for newborn infants. Hippopotamus bone, length 13⅜". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1790 B.C. From Thebes. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh



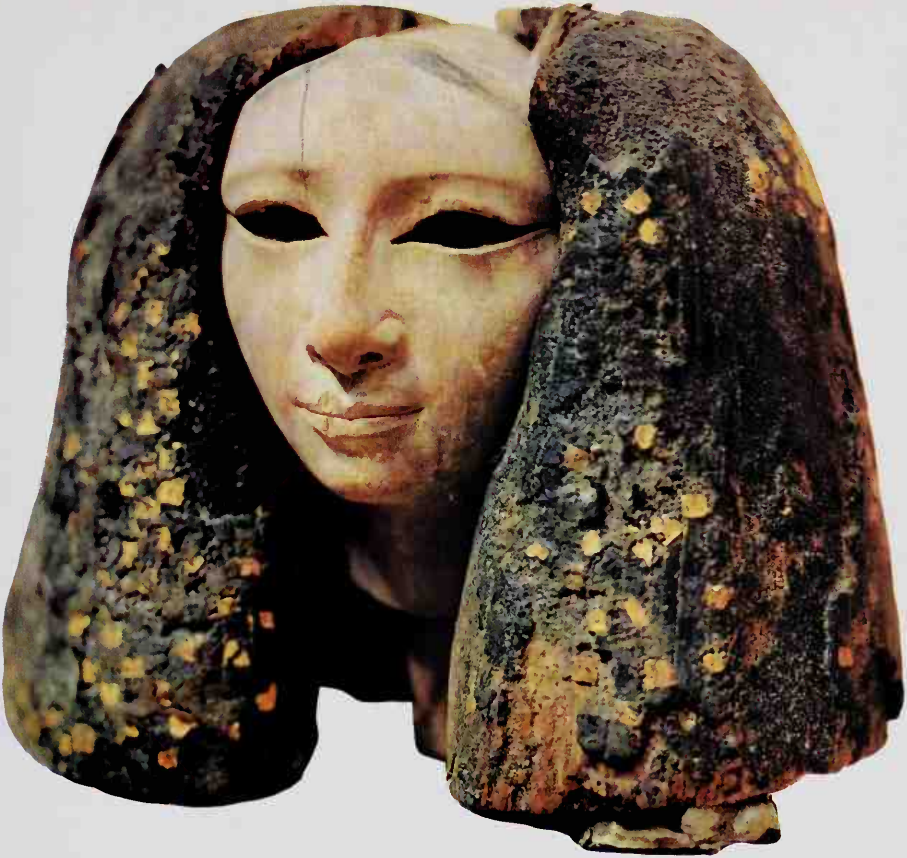
From the time of the Middle Kingdom, the deceased began to have themselves portrayed crouching with their knees drawn up and their bodies wrapped in a cloak or enclosed between the sides of a sedan chair, thus creating the impression of a cube. Art history has coined the term "block statue" for this singular form of sculpture, regarding it as the fulfillment of a striving toward the ideal of compactness, comparable with the creation of the pyramids in architecture. The observation that Egyptians still crouch in this position on the ground establishes a fortunate synthesis between the natural prototype and the artistic intention, but entirely neglects the question of the purpose of these statues within the context of the death cult.

Since all the elements of the cult of the dead have only one objective—to conquer death and achieve the transformation of the deceased into a reborn living person—the block statues might be considered to be a variant of the elementary theme of resurrection, with the dead man looking forward to a new life; in other words, a further development of the Osiris idea. The consistently well-thought-out notion of rebirth presupposes a child-bearing divine element, expressed in mythological form in the coffin, the shrine, the mound of earth, the pyramid, the mummy bandages, the lion bier, the chair of the dead, in short, in everything that envelops the dead. These coverings received the dead man like a womb, to release him once again to life in due course. In the block statue this maternal element is to be seen in the tightly wrapped cloak or in the surfaces of the boxlike sedan chair. Both of these are thus symbolic forms of the mother-goddess Isis, in whose body the deceased squats like a developing child (cf. page 144).

The head of Hetep is sculptured in the round, whereas his crossed arms and muscular legs emerge from the block form as a sort of relief. The inscriptions state that the dead Hetep is cared for by Osiris and Anubis, the gods of the dead.



Hetep as a block statue. Granite, height 29". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1975 B.C. From Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

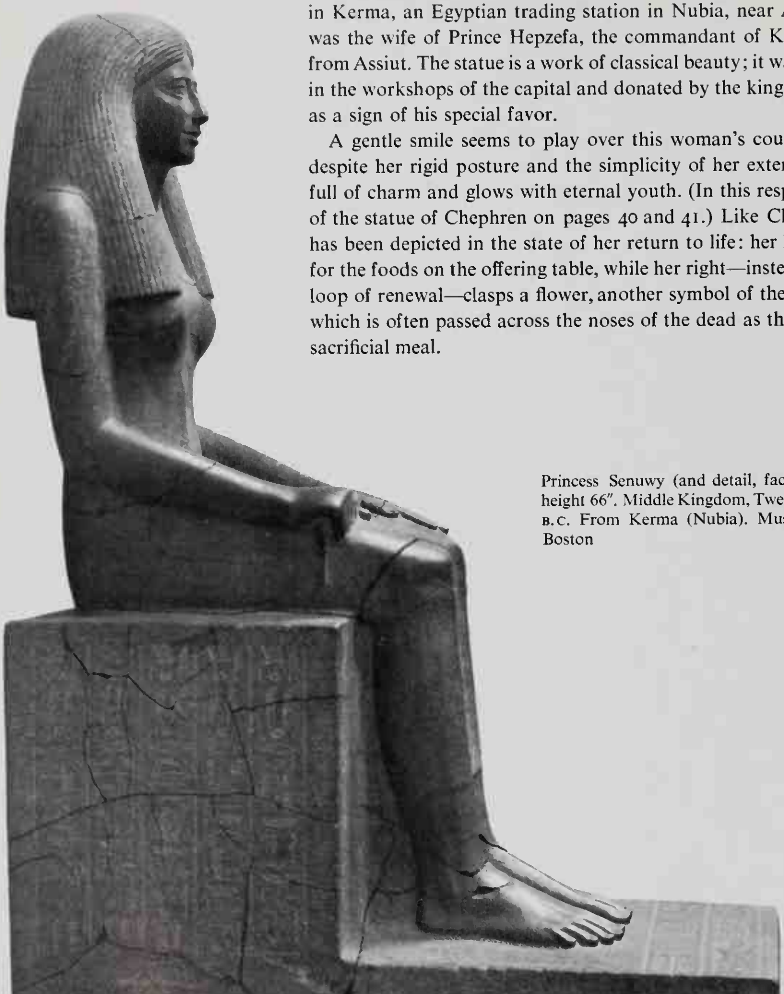


Head of a female statuette. Wood, height $3^3/_8$″. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1950 B.C. From Lisht. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

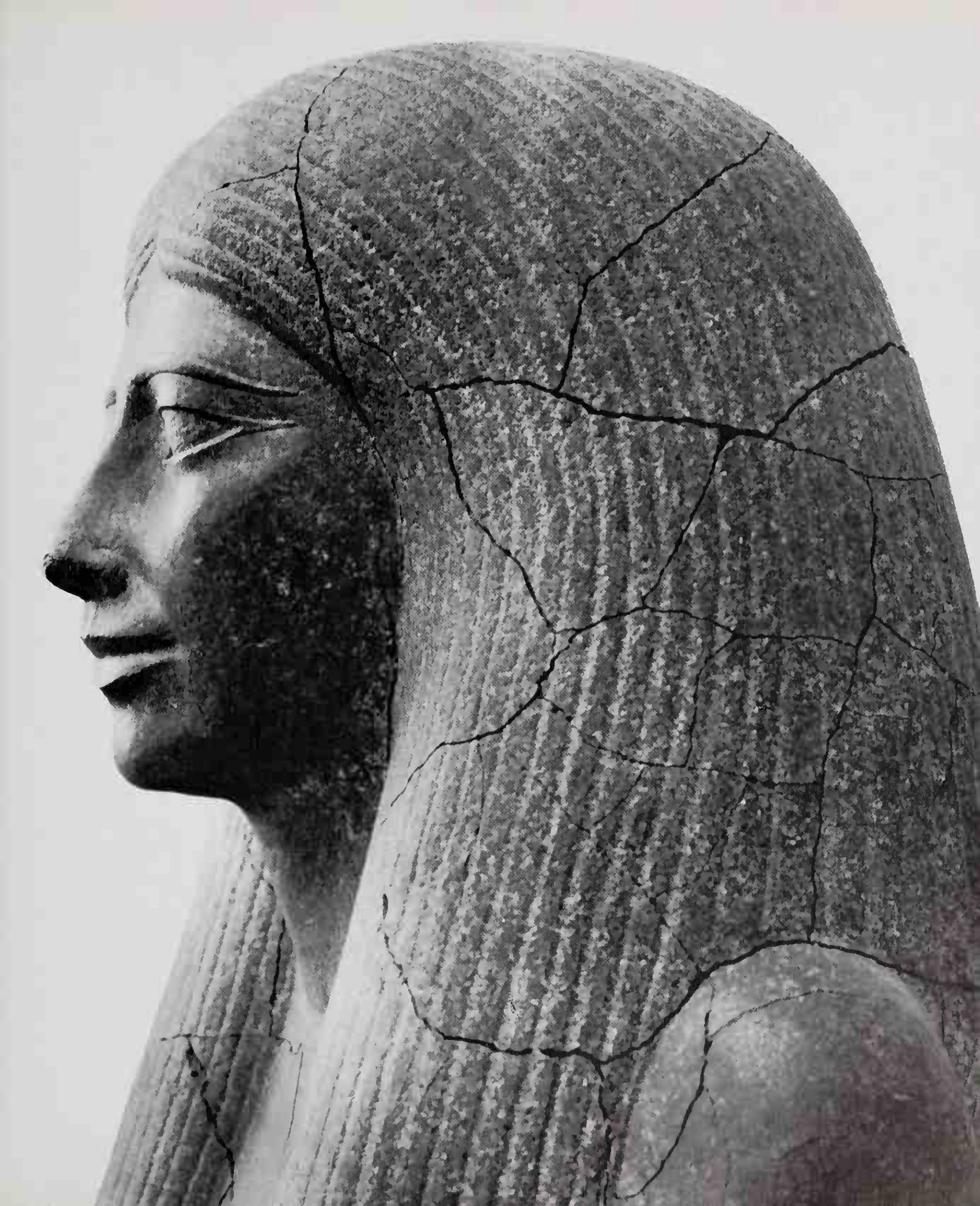
This masterfully carved head, whose eyes were inlaid and whose wig was carved separately and subsequently added, comes from a wooden statuette of a lady at the court of the Twelfth Dynasty. The gold leaf on the wig is probably meant to represent the golden rings that were drawn over the separate locks of hair to keep the coiffure in order and to adorn it. The wig was an attribute of high society and was worn over the natural hair, though it was also employed as a substitute for this when baldness set in, in spite of the many medical prescriptions against graying and loss of hair.

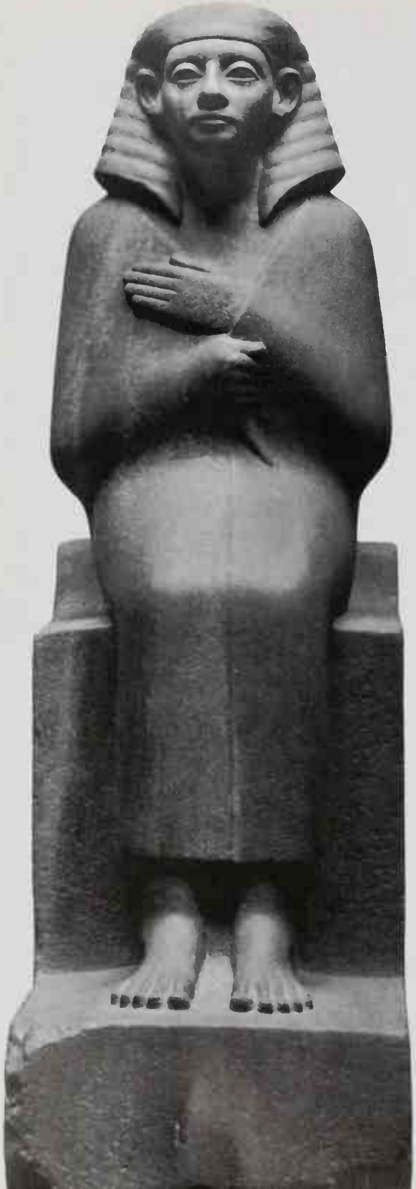
The larger than life-size funerary statue of Princess Senuwy was found in Kerma, an Egyptian trading station in Nubia, near Argo Island. She was the wife of Prince Hepzefa, the commandant of Kerma, who came from Assiut. The statue is a work of classical beauty; it was probably done in the workshops of the capital and donated by the king to far-off Nubia as a sign of his special favor.

A gentle smile seems to play over this woman's countenance, which, despite her rigid posture and the simplicity of her external attributes, is full of charm and glows with eternal youth. (In this respect it is the peer of the statue of Chephren on pages 40 and 41.) Like Chephren, Senuwy has been depicted in the state of her return to life: her left hand reaches for the foods on the offering table, while her right—instead of holding the loop of renewal—clasps a flower, another symbol of the start of new life, which is often passed across the noses of the dead as they partake of the sacrificial meal.



Princess Senuwy (and detail, facing page). Granite, height 66". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1950 B.C. From Kerma (Nubia). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



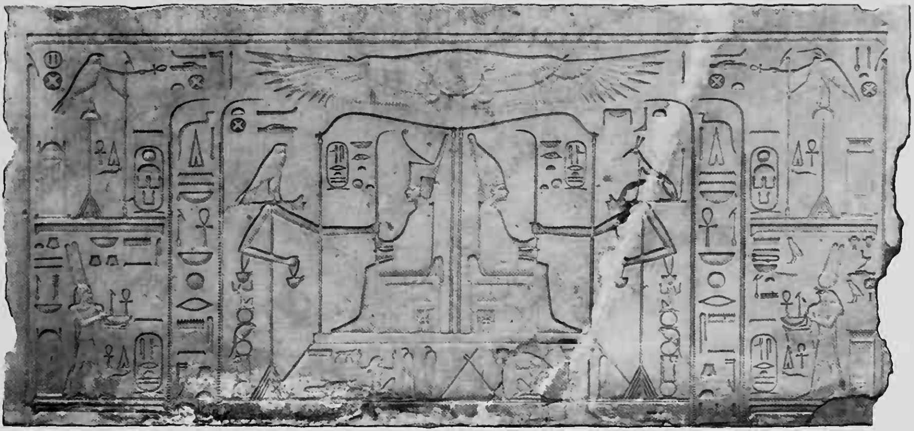


The nomarchs and high officials of the Middle Kingdom liked to have themselves portrayed wrapped in long cloaks, either standing or sitting, so that, in the shape of such statues, they could receive the rites within the tomb or participate in divine services within the temple. Ever since the end of the Old Kingdom, the deceased's right to be present as a statue in the temple, following the example of the king, had prevailed; and he was thus able to participate in the state sacrifices at least, should private care in the tomb cease. Thus, these statues were not so much monuments of the living as ritual implements of the cult of the dead, serving the prospect of a hoped-for afterlife, following an earthly existence.

These cloaked statues are thus also variants of the democratized Osiris idea: as in the block statues (page 80), the dominant cloak is an indispensable prerequisite for the act of renewal. It is, perhaps, the private version of the white cloak worn by the king at his Festival of Renewal (see pages 30, 69), which, in turn, was probably nothing more than a reproduction of the mummy's bindings.

These claims to royal prerogatives are heightened in the tombs of the nomarchs and dignitaries, who took over the whip, crook, scepter, and other elements of the king's garb, in order to be completely equipped in death with all the attributes of Osiris.

Cloaked statue of the nomarch Kherty-hetep. Brown sandstone, height 30". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1870 B.C. Supposedly from Al-Burj el Hamam. State Museums, Berlin (East)



Door lintel. Limestone, 5′ 1″ × 11′ 2″. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1850 B.C. From the temple at Medamud. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

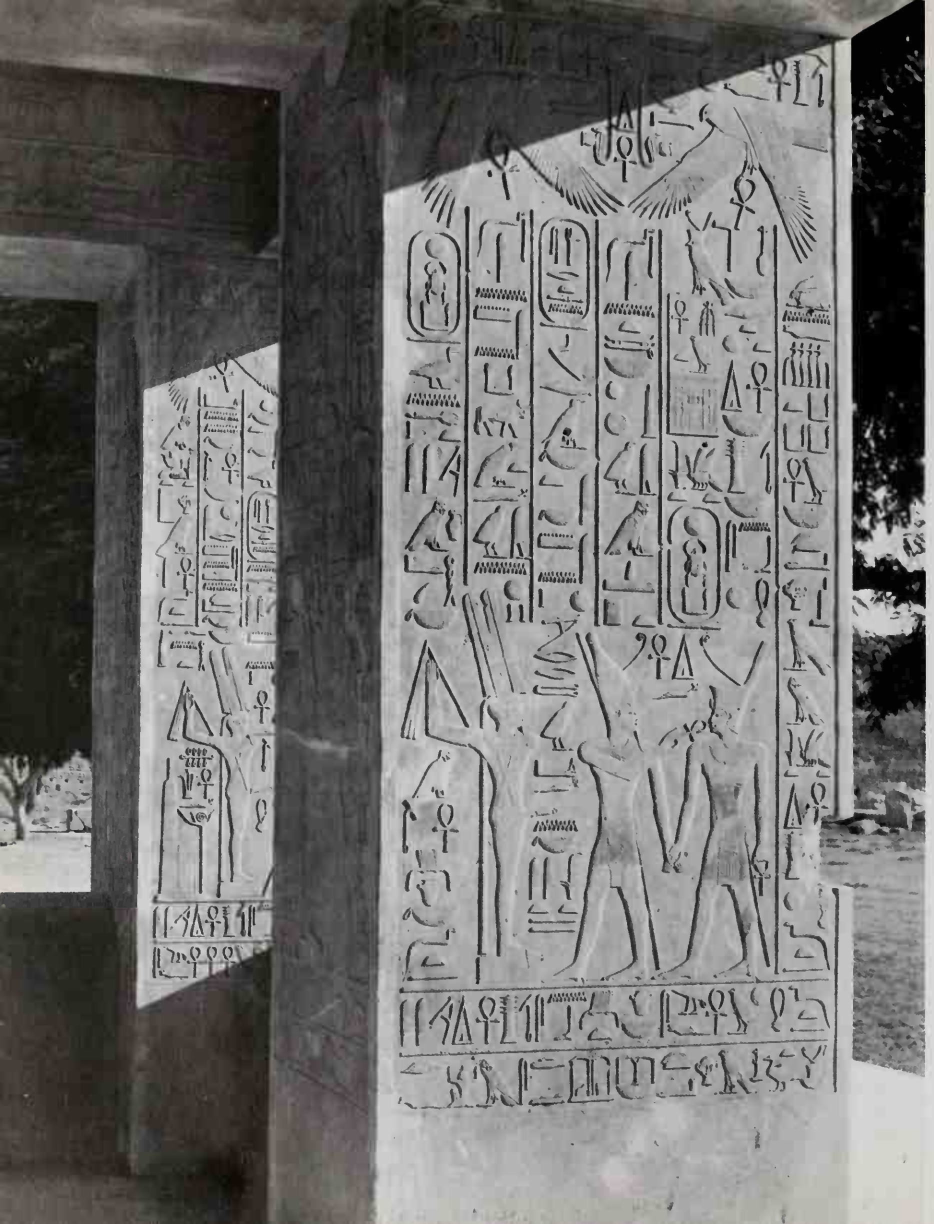
Two long-necked animals (cf. page 25), stylized into scepters, support the sky, which is covered with stars. These elements, which constitute the bounds of the world, frame the portrayal of the jubilee of the reign of Sesostris III. This is to be taken as symbolic rather than realistic, since image and inscription, in conformity with their common origin, shade into each other almost imperceptibly and have to be viewed and read together.

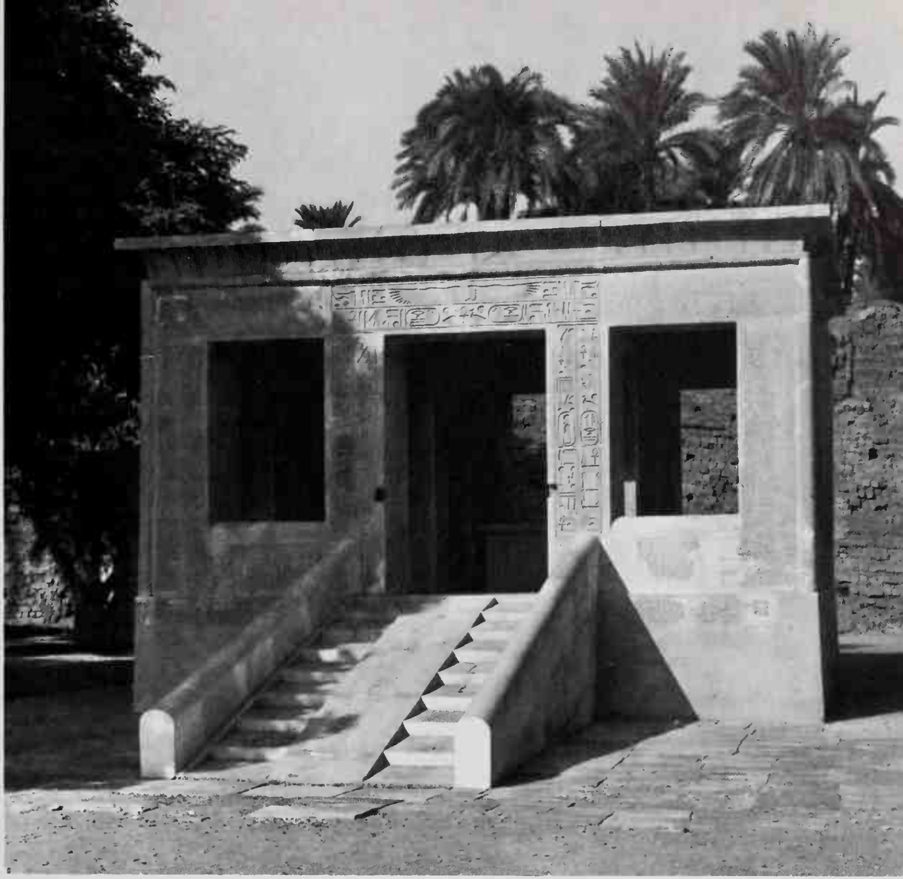
The disk of the sun floats in the sky as the central force, encircled by its two protecting snakes, its wings guarding the events that are vitally necessary for the prosperity of the country. The king, wrapped in the festive cloak, is enthroned on a podium in a double chapel. At the right, he wears the crown of Upper Egypt; at the left, that of Lower Egypt. On standards, the national gods, Seth of Upper Egypt (at the right) and Horus of Lower Egypt (at the left), each present a palm frond, signifying "year" or "renewal," to the king. The numerical hieroglyphs "thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, million," arranged in vertical columns alongside the standards, complete the picture, which must therefore be interpreted as an infinite prolongation of the king's reign by the gods.

The Theban gods Montu (bottom right) and Amon (bottom left) appear as figures at the margin, as do the gods of the old royal cities, the heron-god of Buto (top right), and the hawk-god of Nekhen (top left), who likewise confer "life" and "prosperity" (represented by their hieroglyphic symbols).

The partition of the king into his Upper Egyptian and Lower Egyptian aspects has, in addition to its political interpretation ("the king unites in his person dominion over both kingdoms"), a cosmic significance: Upper and Lower Egypt are considered to be, respectively, the eastern and western points of the sun's course. Accordingly, the double king would be represented as an ascending, renewed king and as a descending, abdicating king; that is, before and after the act of renewal.

The jubilee festival is probably a survival of an older inheritance festival, in the course of which the reigning king was ritually eliminated after thirty years of rule, to make way for a younger, fresher representative and guarantor of vitality.





◀ Columns of the peripteral temple of Sesostris I. The god Atum conducts the king to his divine father Amon-Ra

Peripteral temple of Sesostris I. Limestone. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1970–1925 B.C. At Karnak

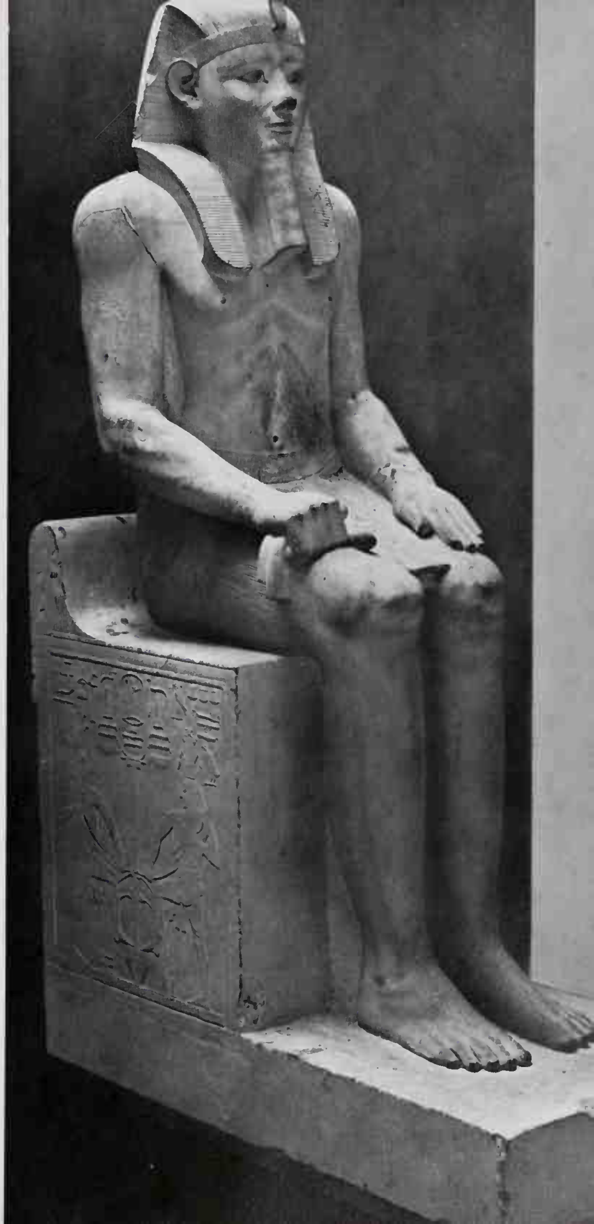
With limestone blocks recovered from a pylon of the Eighteenth Dynasty, it has been possible to reconstruct a little peripteral temple, which adds considerably to our knowledge of the architecture of the Migdle Kingdom, almost all of which was plundered for later structures. A central hall, which presumably served as a transit station for the sacred barge, is enclosed by columns that support the roof with its hollow molding. In front and at the rear, ramps lead up to the building, which is raised on a plinth.

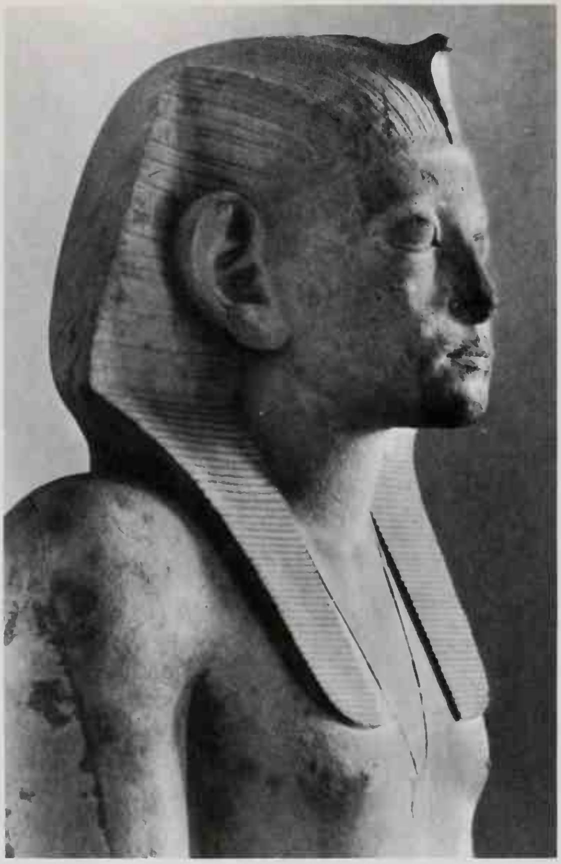
Seated statue of King Sesostris I. Limestone, height 78¾″. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1930 B.C. From Lisht. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

◀ This statue of the king, found with several other similar examples, and resembling the seated statues of King Chephren (see pages 40, 41), stood in the court of the Lisht temple of the dead, surrounded by rectangular pillars. The left hand reaches out for the offerings, while the right hand clasps the loop amulet, from which the forces of resurrection flow. These seated figures are a continuation of a series of statues leaning against the pillars of the causeway corridor, which still portray the king as a mummylike Osiris. In contrast to the latter, his seated posture expresses the fact that the king has already been released from the rigidity of a mummy and has returned to life.

The personifications of Upper Egypt (with a lotus on his head) and Lower Egypt (with a papyrus), portrayed as portly men, tie their heraldic plants around the hieroglyph for "windpipe," which here signifies "union." The king's name, enclosed in a cartouche, is placed on the hieroglyphic symbol. The inscription states that the gods Horus (at the right) and Seth (at the left) have assigned their rule over Lower and Upper Egypt to the king. This representation of the joining of the two parts into a whole expresses the fact that order reigns, so that the prosperity of the country is assured.

◀ Detail of the throne of the Sesostris statue

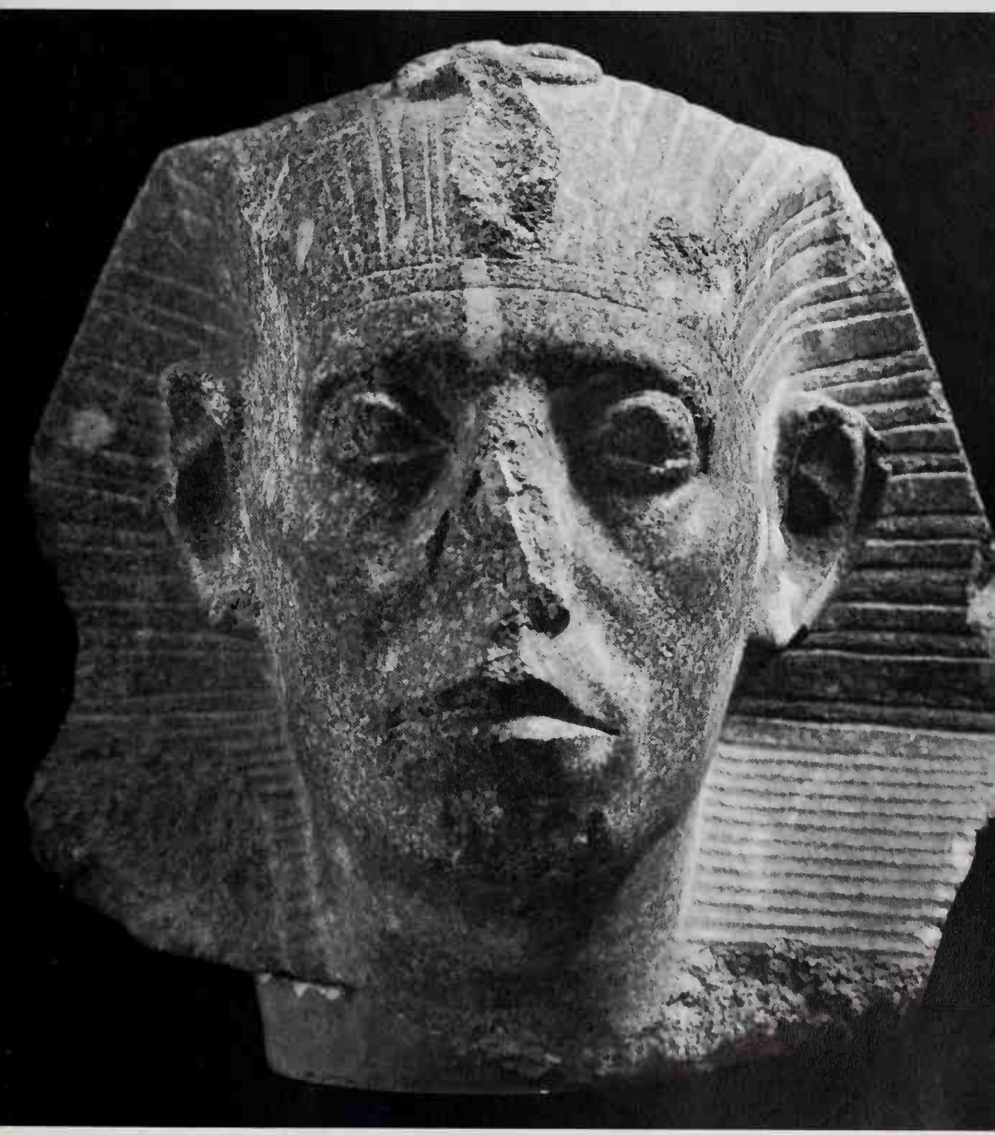


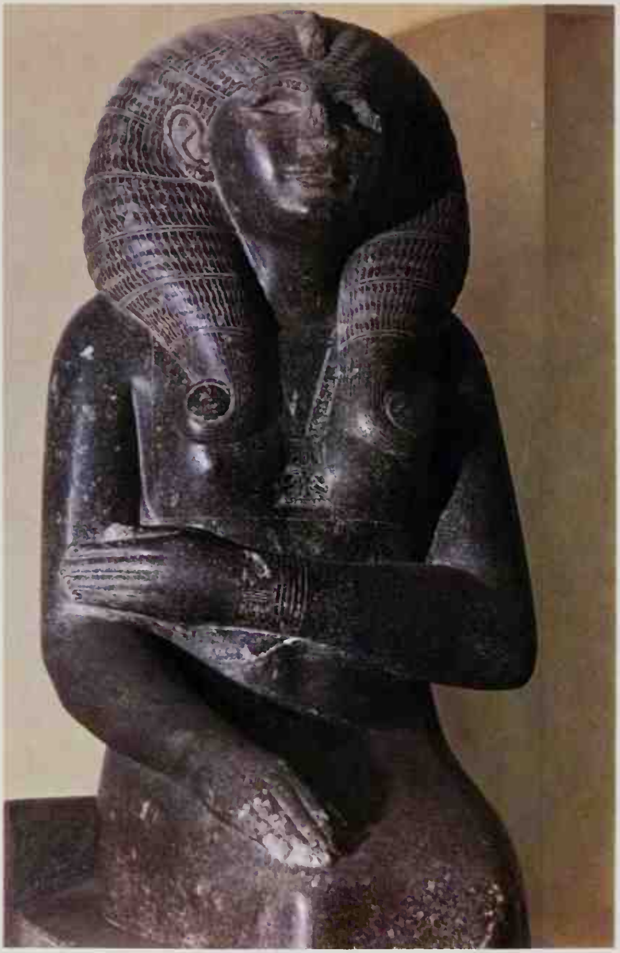


Detail of the seated statue of King Amenemhat III. Limestone, over-all height of the statue 63", height of the detail c. $21^1/_2$". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1800 B.C. From his funerary temple in Hawara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Head of King Sesostris III. Granite, height $11^3/_8$". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1850 B.C. From Medamud. Egyptian Museum, Cairo ▶

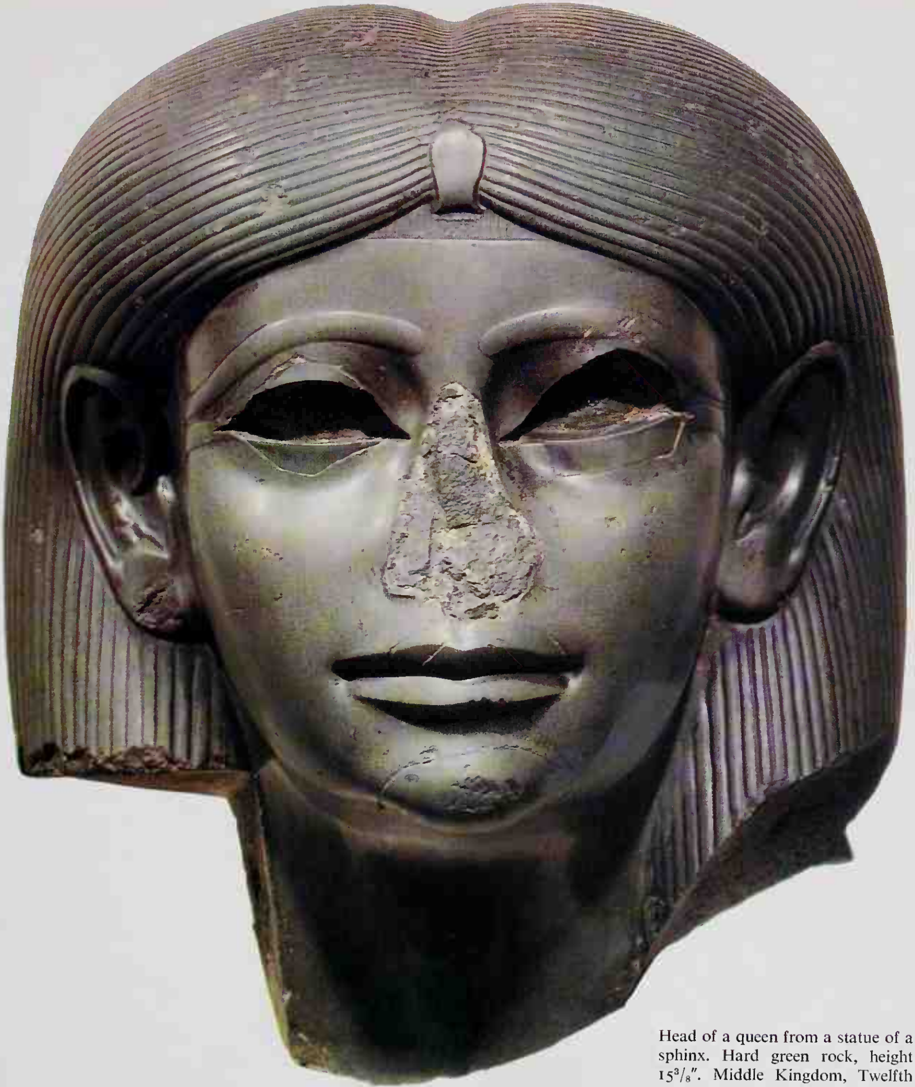
Only two generations separate the portraits of Kings Sesostris III and Amenemhat III from that of Sesostris I, the second king of the dynasty (see page 89). Within this interval of time great changes have taken place. The radiant, youthful expression of the king, full of serene confidence, has vanished. Instead, earnest, pensive, even melancholy traits have been engraved on his countenance. Youthful elasticity has given way to the symptoms of old age (wrinkles, bags beneath the eyes) and has been replaced by a certain fatigue and resignation. These statues no longer show a divine king, ruling by virtue of the fact that he is the son of a god and commanding unquestioning obedience, but rather a ruler plagued by evil experiences, who has to bear the heavy burden of his responsible office in an environment that is becoming secular and profane, and who has to compensate for the dwindling of divine authority in his person by the substitution of human qualities. Contemporary works of literature describe in deeply moving terms the human fate of the king, battling in heroic solitude. Such descriptions give added credence to the impression gained from such works of art as these.





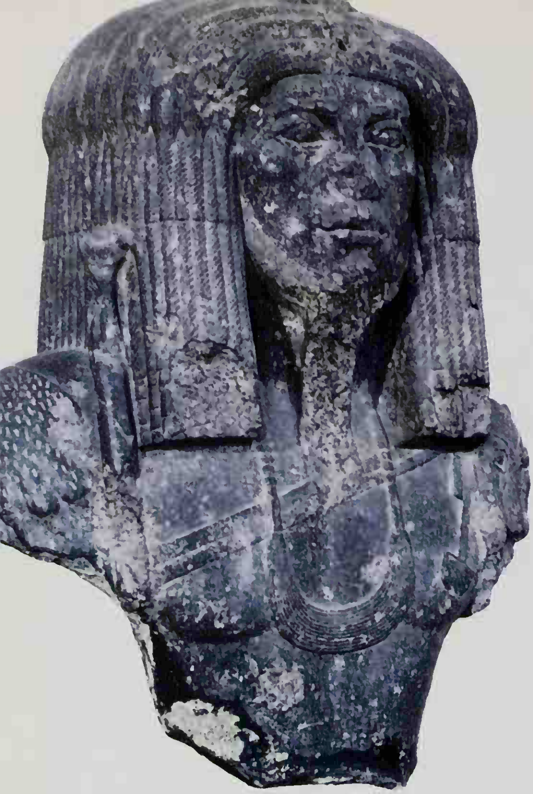
Seated statue of Queen Nefret, consort of Sesostris II. Black granite, height 44". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1890 B.C. From Tanis. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The life-size statue of Queen Nefret shows the posture of the dead in front of the offering table. Thus it is most likely a tomb statue, transferred to the Ramesside royal residence during the New Kingdom. As in the case of the goddess Hathor, the wig lies in heavy tresses on the shoulders, ending in curls over the bosom. As decoration, Nefret wears armbands and a breastplate, a so-called pectoral, suspended over her bosom from a necklace. Similar objects have been found in contemporary tombs (see page 97). From the crown of her head rises the uraeus snake, the outward symbol of royal status, which originally was the divine protector of the ruler of heaven, and which has now taken on its earthly hypostasis.



Head of a queen from a statue of a sphinx. Hard green rock, height 15 3/8". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1920–1880 B.C. Brooklyn Museum, New York

Front view of a sphinx of Amenemhat III. Black granite, over-all length 88½″, height of the detail c. 35½″. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1800 B.C. From Tanis. Egyptian Museum, Cairo ▶

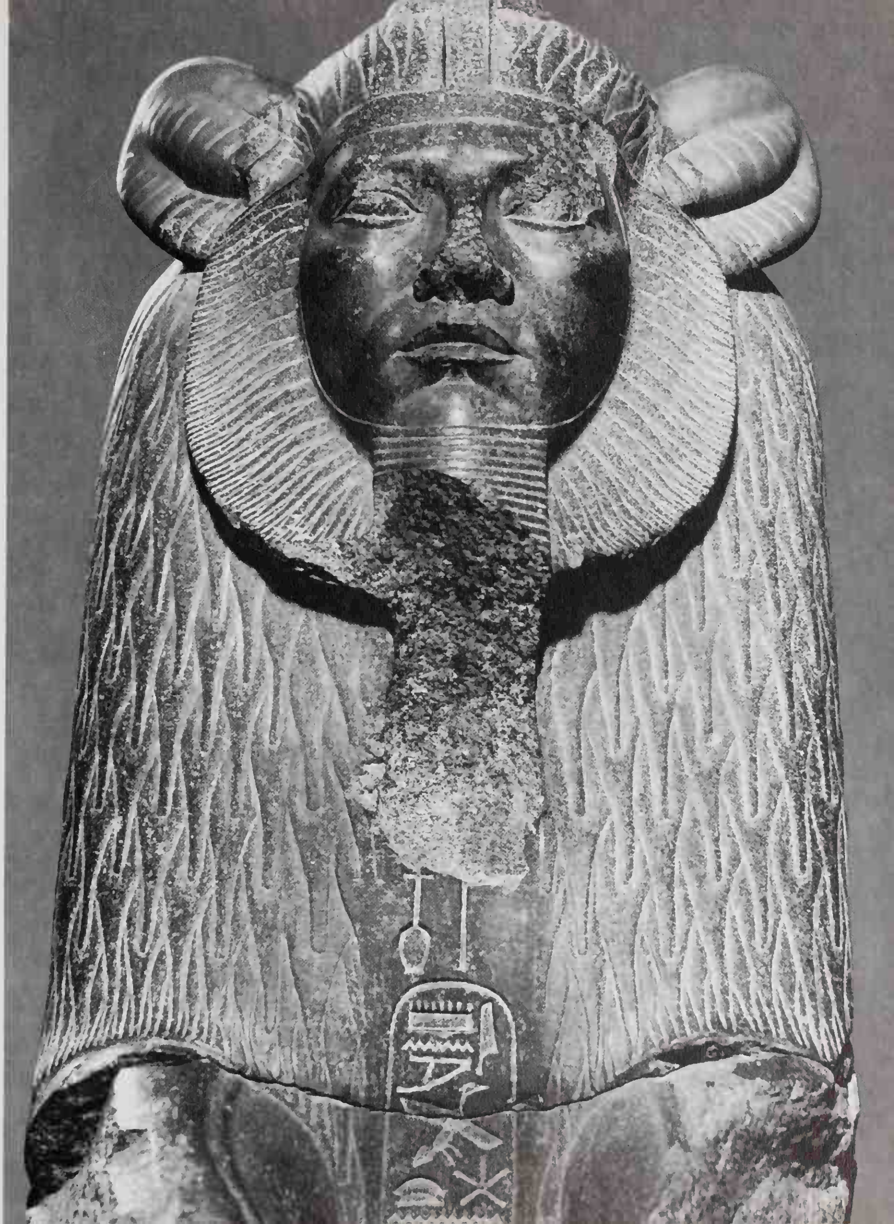


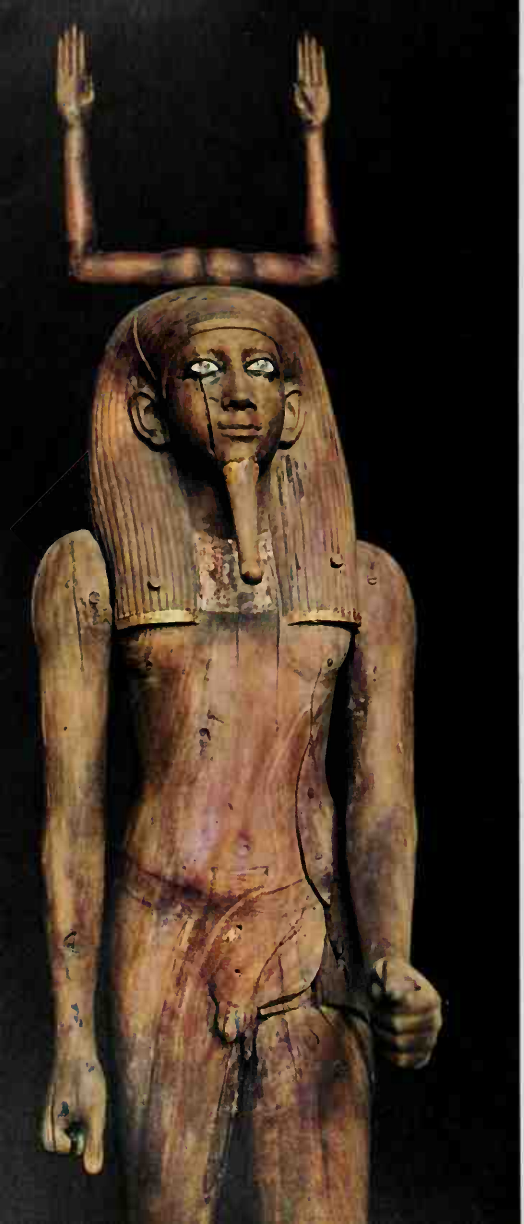
A king in an old-fashioned costume. Black granite, height 39½″. Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, perhaps c. 1840 B.C. From Mit Faris (Faiyum). Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Exhibiting the rough features of Amenemhat III, and therefore sometimes identified with that ruler, a king of the Middle Kingdom had himself portrayed in a costume similar to that worn by the king's son and heir who runs ahead of his father on the Narmer palette (see page 25). Characteristic details are the panther skin with the shoulder loop ending in semicircular bucklers (visible on the left shoulder of the statue, alongside the panther's head), and the excessively long-stranded wig. Unlike the king's son of the early period of unification of the kingdom, this figure has also a breast shawl, a staff ending in the head of a hawk, and a uraeus snake on his brow (inferred only from the hole, in which the uraeus, probably made of metal, was inserted). The uraeus proves that the portrait is that of a king. On the other hand, the old-fashioned costume implies that his status is that of heir to the throne, so that this statue may be that of Amenemhat as coruler, who shared sovereignty for a short time with his father, Sesostris III, as the latter's son and chosen successor.

Royal sphinx figures were probably originally intended for use in the cult of the dead (see page 45), but with the secularization of the Middle Kingdom, the sphinxes take on the function of monuments for the contemporary world. Thus these statues also follow the general trend from tomb sculpture to temple sculpture (see page 58).

This statue differs from the usual royal sphinxes, in which human and animal features are merely added together, in that a harmonious unity is achieved by having the lion's mane surround the human countenance. The uraeus snake and the royal beard (as well as the kings' names added by later usurpers) are the sole remaining vestiges of the outward emblems of royalty. The artistic design makes a statement about the contemporary kingdom, however, by combining in a single figure the strength of the animal, ready to spring, with the will of the sovereign, resolved to exercise his power ruthlessly.



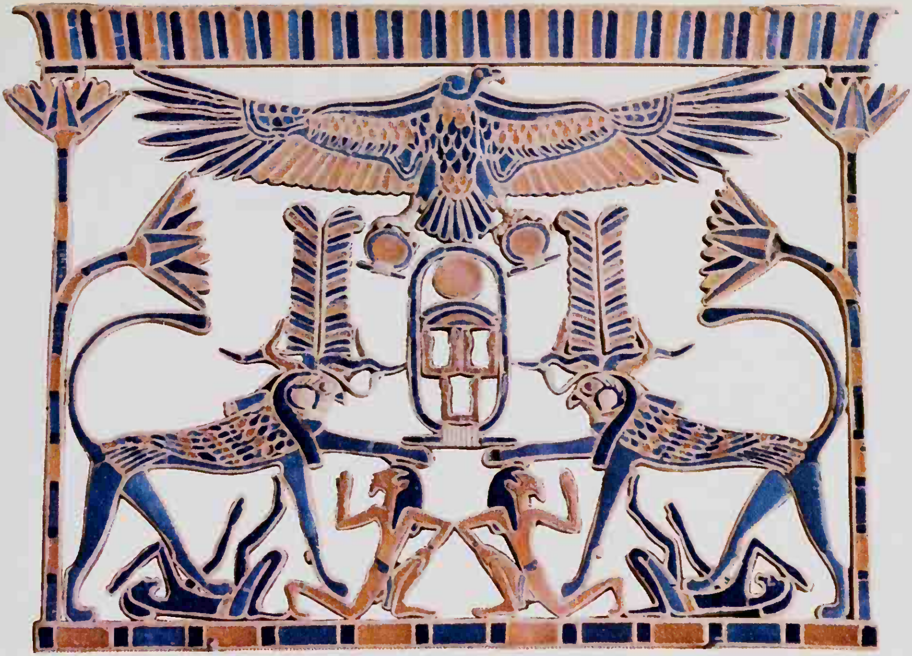


The wooden statue of King Horus was found standing in a wooden shrine within a tomb. The hieroglyph for "*ka*" on its head proves that it is a so-called *ka* statue of the king. The Egyptians used this untranslatable word "*ka*" to denote the force that created and preserved life and finally gathered it up in death—hence, a constituent part of a more comprehensive deity, rendered independent and spiritualized. Originally it probably meant that physical power that set stationary objects in motion, for the same root word leads to a word for "work," namely, the work of lifting or carrying.

In imitation of the sun, which called upon certain animal powers or deities as "its *ka*" to help it accomplish its daily voyage through the sky—a task which demanded the continuous renewal of vital forces—the king (and later on every individual) secured his personal *ka*, which, represented as a second self, had to provide him with his life force. The upraised arms are associated with the notion of a protective embrace.

The *ka* statue of King Horus, now robbed of its attributes, originally wore an apron. The left hand grasped a staff, while the right hand held a feather, the hieroglyph for "Maat," the goddess of the universe, who could likewise act as *ka* for the sun-god Ra (and analogously for the king), bringing about cyclic resurrection. The pupils of the eyes, inlaid in rock crystal, and the painted wood, some of which was gilded, together with the youthful body, gave this embodiment of life the desired lifelike expression.

Ka statue of King Horus. Ebony, over-all height 69". Middle Kingdom, Thirteenth Dynasty, c. 1785–1655 B.C. From Dahshur. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Breastplate ("pectoral"). Gold and semiprecious stones, height $2^3/_8$". Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1850 B.C. From Dahshur. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

This pectoral, similar to that worn by the consort of Sesostris II (see page 92), comes from a princesses' tomb near the pyramid of Sesostris III.

Two plant columns support the vault of heaven, depicted as a hollow molding, under which the vulture-goddess—another personification of the sky—spreads her wings to protect the world of Egypt and, more especially, the governmental actions of her son, the Egyptian king. At the center of the pectoral is the name of King Sesostris III himself, who is also represented symbolically in the pair of confronted griffins. As far back as the Old Kingdom, the Pharaoh appears in this hybrid form (which combined all the royal qualities of the bird of prey and the predatory beast, and which was primarily a hypostasis of the sun-god) whenever there were enemies to be defeated and universal order to be upheld.

The Twelfth Dynasty pectorals and those found in the Tutankhamon treasure (see page 148) are among the best examples of the art of the ancient Egyptian goldsmiths. The admirable miniature work (with lapis lazuli, turquoise, and carnelian inlaid in gold) was principally done by dwarfs.

NEW KINGDOM

Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1550–1305 B.C.)

The Middle Kingdom culminated in the mighty sovereigns of the Twelfth Dynasty, who ruled the united kingdom by virtue of their own personalities, and who were able to break the power of the nomarchs. It was the dominating will of the reigning king that guaranteed the integrity of the state, rather than the institution of monarchy.

Kings with the sonorous name of Amenemhat are also found in the succeeding Thirteenth Dynasty, but they obviously no longer possess the qualities of their predecessors and models. Kings succeed one another rapidly, the power of the capital vanishes, disorders break out, and the unity of the kingdom disintegrates anew. The "Second Intermediate period" begins, repeating the chaotic conditions that had brought the Egyptians, accustomed to order, to the brink of downfall at the end of the Old Kingdom, when law and order collapsed. Exploiting this political paralysis, rather than causing it, foreign immigrants, pushed through the Near East into the Delta by the migration of the Indo-Europeans, established an alien rule on Egyptian soil. These kings, called "Hyksos," are entered in the later official king lists as a separate dynasty (the Fifteenth).

The Hyksos ruled Egypt from their capital in the northeast of the Delta, while a local kingdom (the Seventeenth Dynasty) was established in Thebes. After several decades of gathering its forces, this kingdom challenged the sovereignty of the Hyksos and began a war of liberation.

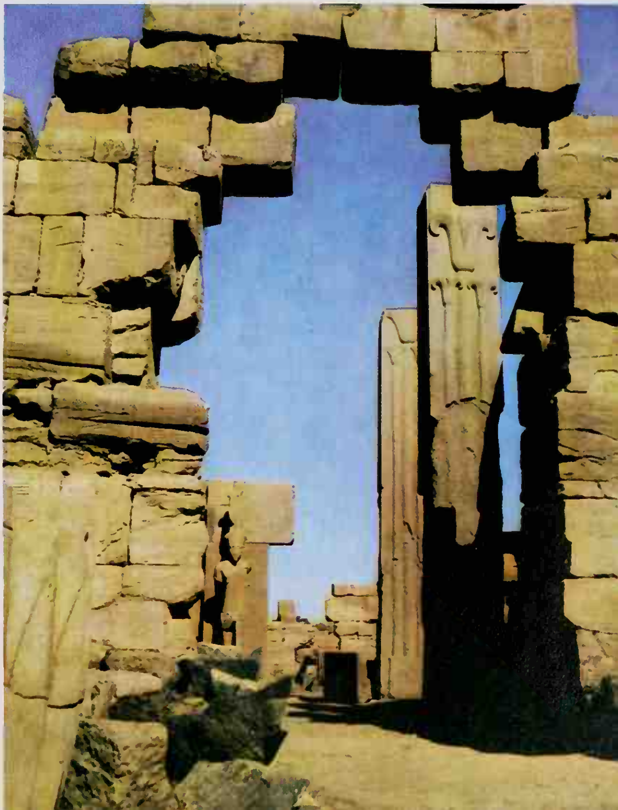
What was begun by the last sovereigns of the Seventeenth Dynasty was brought to completion by Ahmose, a member of the same family. He drove the alien rulers out of Egypt and reunited the two lands, so that unification was effected from Upper Egypt for the third time in history.

Ahmose, as the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, initiates the third great period of Pharaonic history. The "New Kingdom" becomes the era of empire, for the armies tried and tested in the war of liberation follow the defeated enemy in hot pursuit beyond the frontiers into Asia, conquering new countries from which incalculable booty and, later on, regular tribute flow to Egypt. More and more lands are conquered in well-organized campaigns and secured with garrisons, until, after barely one hundred years, the Egyptian Empire under Tuthmosis III reaches the greatest extent in its history: Egyptian troops are established from Napata, deep inside Nubia, to the Euphrates, controlling a gigantic empire some two thousand miles in extent. In seventeen campaigns Tuthmosis III established a chain of strongpoints that served as supply bases and as jumping-off points for further advances.

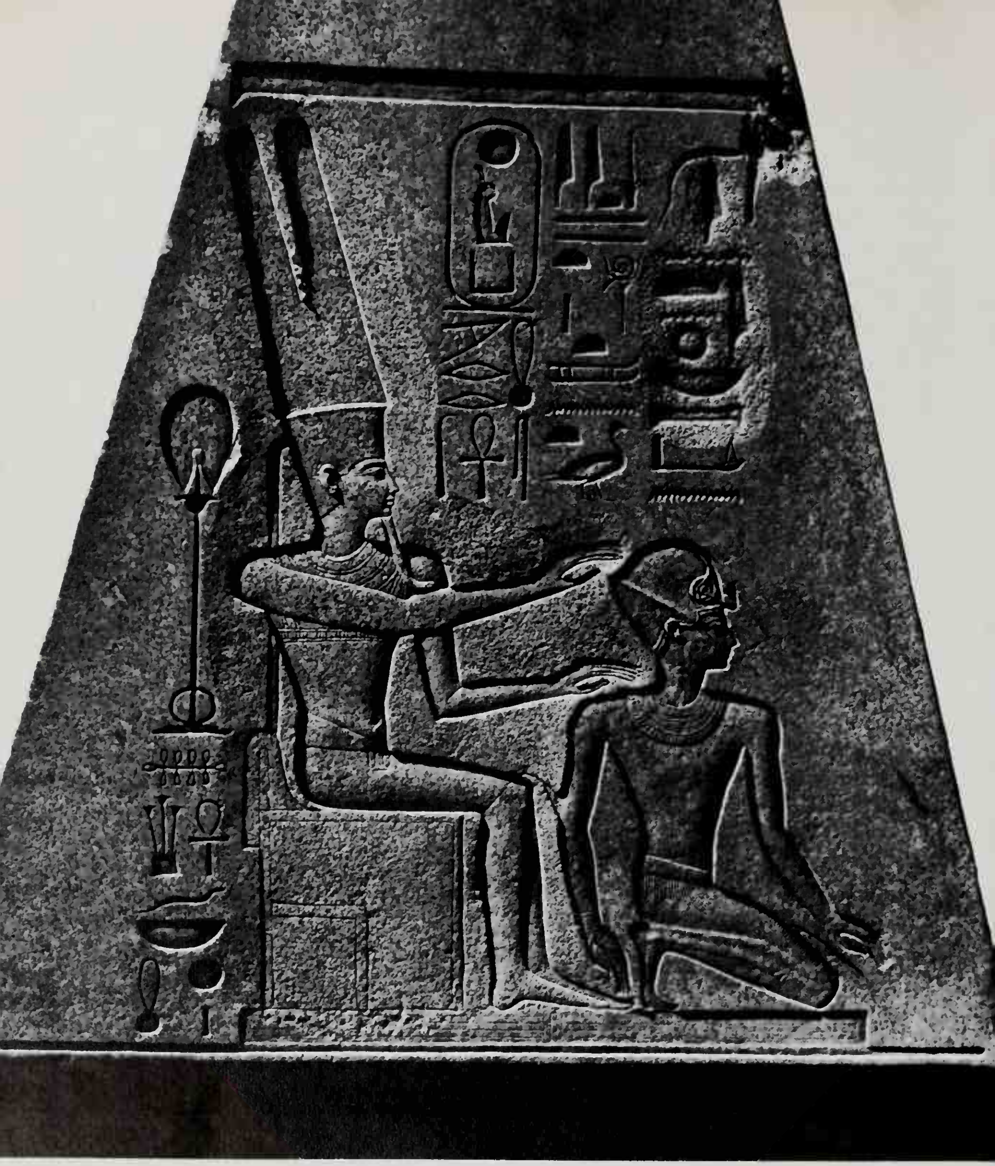
Tuthmosis III was not merely a great military leader and organizer, but was equally great as a statesman who knew how to make his conquests endure. He became the real architect of the Egyptian Empire, and his name was feared and honored from Nubia to the Mitanni Kingdom on the Euphrates.

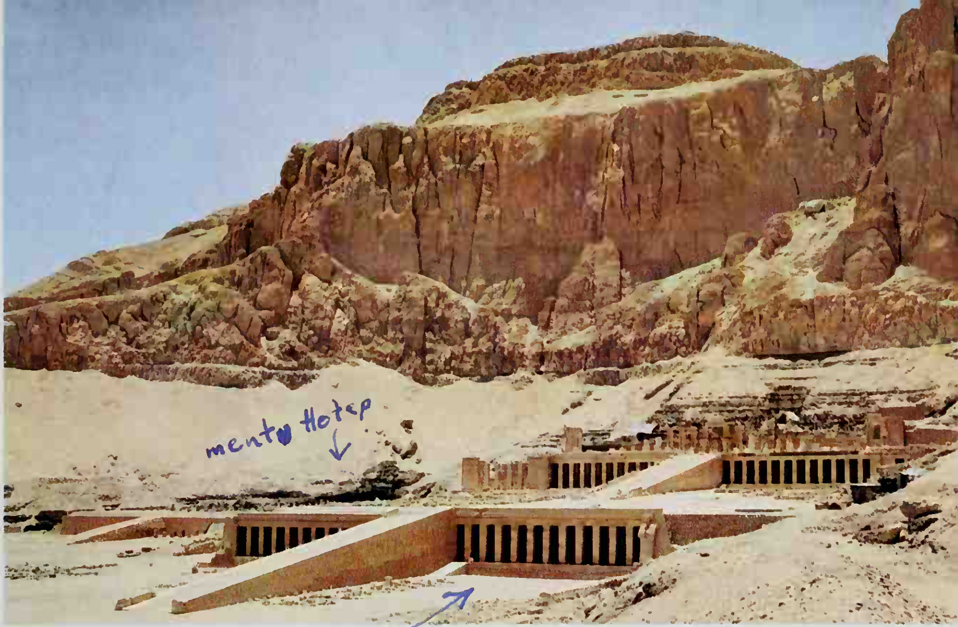
The tribute regularly flowing into Egypt was dedicated to the god Amon, who had been promoted from the local god of Thebes to "King of the Gods," in gratitude for his assistance. His dwelling, the imperial temple in Karnak, was expanded into a true temple city under the sovereigns of the New Kingdom, as each king tried to surpass his predecessor in the boldness and size of his buildings.

Tuthmosis III had the campaign reports and the lists and pictures of the booty brought home and dedicated to the god incised on the walls of the "Halls of Annals" at Karnak. The ceiling of one hall was supported by two granite pillars, which, on account of their position, were called the northern and southern supports of the sky. The heraldic plants of Lower and Upper Egypt, the papyrus and the lotus, point to the south and the north. Attached to the lotus flower, at the very junction of heaven and earth, is the name of the king in a cartouche (cf. pages 88, 102–3).



View of Tuthmosis III's Hall of Annals at Karnak, and (facing page) a granite pillar in the Hall of Annals. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1450 B.C.





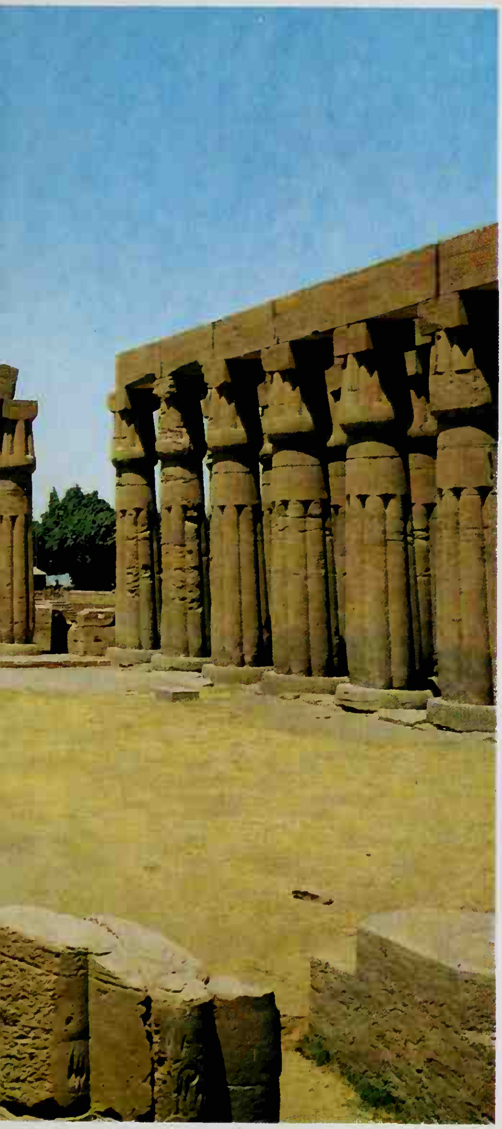
Mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut. Limestone. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1475 B.C. At Deir el Bahari

Queen Hatshepsut chose a special kind of background for her mortuary temple. It is embedded in the thousand-foot high cliffs of the Western Mountain at Thebes, into which the sun and, in imitation of it, the kings and private individuals enter in death.

Like the temple of Neb-hepet-ra Mentuhotep (Eleventh Dynasty, see pages 69–70), visible at the left of the picture, the temple was laid out in terraces, with ramps leading up to them, and ended within the mountain itself. The most important events in the life of the queen are depicted on the walls, such as the expedition to Punt, the legendary land of incense. Of special significance in the history of religion is the sequence of scenes portraying Hatshepsut as the daughter of Amon, king of the gods.

These and other features, not least the fortunate combination of architecture and landscape, make this temple one of the most remarkable structures of the Pharaonic period.

◀ Tip of the obelisk (now fallen) of Queen Hatshepsut, which used to stand alongside its counterpart (which is still standing) between the fourth and fifth pylons in the imperial sanctuary of Karnak. Pink granite, height 90′, width at base 8′ 8″, weight 355 tons. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1475 B.C. The queen, in the garb of a male sovereign, kneels before her divine father Amon-Ra, who bestows protection, bliss, and vital force on his daughter (the god's arms form the hieroglyph *ka* [vital force], see page 96). The name of the god was obliterated under Akhenaten and later cut into the stone once more



The temple at Luxor is dedicated to the imperial god Amon; Mut, the goddess of heaven; and their son Khonsu, the god of the moon. The visitor, who has just passed through the passageway of papyriform columns over fifty feet high with capitals in the shape of open papyrus umbels, enters the colonnaded court of Amenhotep III, whose columns are in the shape of papyrus bundles with closed-umbel capitals. Beyond the double colonnades is an antechamber supported by the same columns, with four columns each way on either side of a somewhat wider space for the central passage. The king's name is incised in a cartouche on the abacus of the papyrus columns (cf. pages 98, 99). Beyond the antechamber lies the sanctuary, the dwelling-place of the image of the god.

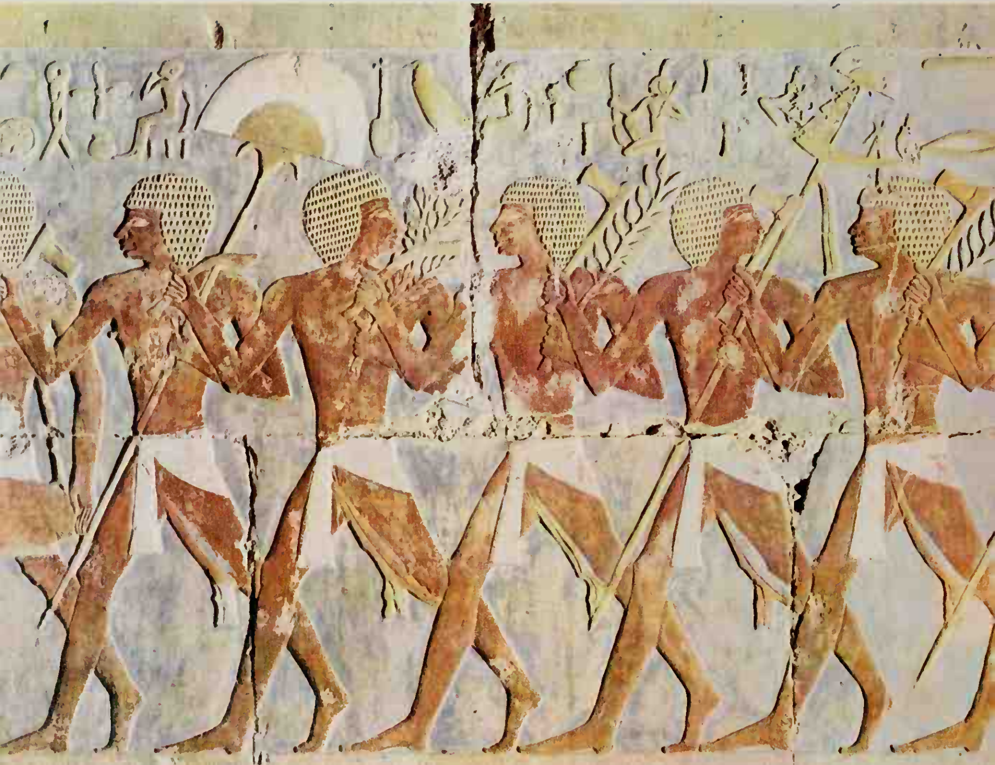
However, from the point of view of the god, who has passed the night in the darkness of the cella, the path runs in the opposite direction. He forces his way through the papyrus thicket, his mythological birthplace. As the path ascends, he leaves behind him the papyrus, whose umbel capitals are still closed in the morning, bringing the plants into bloom as he travels through the sky. By now the high columns have their umbel capitals open.

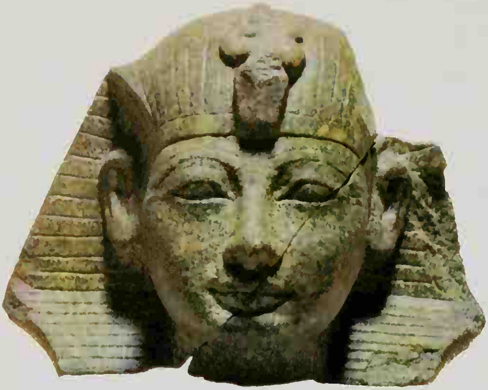
Colonnaded court in the temple at Luxor, Thebes. View from the high colonnaded entrance toward the south. Built under Amenhotep III. Sandstone, length 138′, width 170′. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1380 B.C.

Upper part of a statue of King Tuthmosis III. Hard gray-green schist, height of the detail c. 15$^3/_4$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1450 B.C. From Karnak. Egyptian Museum, Cairo ▶

The founder of the empire has had himself portrayed in the garb of the Pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (with bare chest, royal headdress, and ceremonial beard), thus associating himself, much more justifiably than other kings before him, with the great era of the pyramid builders. In the reign of his predecessor and stepmother, Queen Hatshepsut, the Syrian princes had begun to lose their fear of Egypt, but Tuthmosis III demonstrated Egypt's military power in seventeen campaigns, and won for the kingdom its greatest extent in history. This created the material basis for the fantastic riches that thenceforth flowed into Egypt, filling the storehouses of the Pharaohs and, to an even greater extent, the temples of the gods.

Parade of the elite troops carrying, in addition to their weapons (axes and throwing sticks), branches, standards, and a fan. Painted relief in the temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari. Limestone, size of the detail 18$^1/_2$ × 26$^1/_2$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1475 B.C.



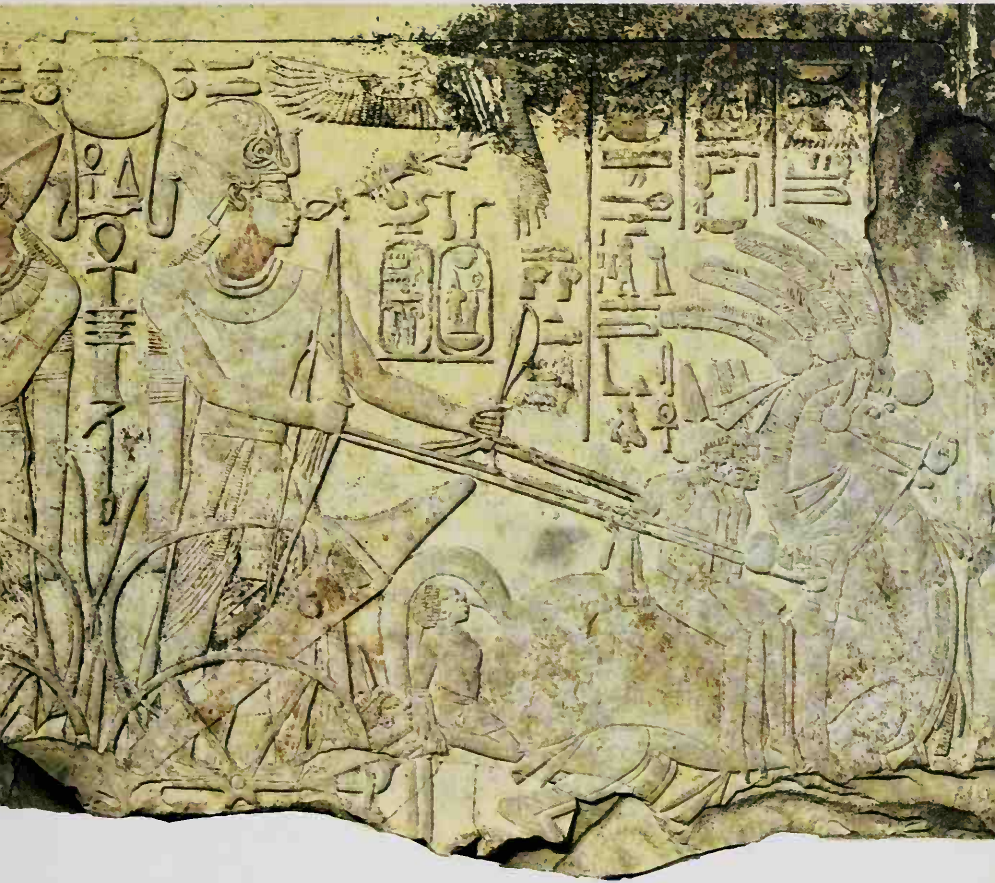


Head of King Amenhotep II, from a sphinx statue. Green granodiorite, height $3^5/_8$", width $4^5/_8$". New Kingdom. Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1425 B.C. Presumably from Karnak. State Collection of Egyptian Art, Munich

While still the crown prince, Amenhotep II was familiarized by his father Tuthmosis III with the "work of [the war-god] Montu." "He knew how to drive a team of horses; he had no equal in this great army; nobody else could draw his bow; he could not be overtaken in foot-racing." This characterization of the young ruler in a contemporary inscription is illustrated by the portrait of the king, who seems to have been the ideal figure of the gallant young hero in his time.

Apart from several lion hunts, a campaign against Nubia in the first decade of his reign is the only event ▶ in King Amenhotep's life that might perhaps have impressed his mighty and heroic ancestors. The heir of the empire no longer had anything to conquer. He enjoyed the riches of the country and led Egypt to an unprecedented cultural refinement, which was financed by the tribute of the conquered provinces and the imposts paid by his allied vassals. The principal source of wealth was the mines of Nubia, the "Land of Gold," which, as in the scene depicted on the facing page, was called "miserable Kush" in the official language.

Protected by the uraeus-bearing sun-disk, the king attacks his enemies in two opposite directions (he turns toward Asia at the left). Captured Nubians are bound to the reins and chained to the front of the war chariot; others, trampled beneath the horses' hoofs, were certainly depicted on the broken part of the stele, as has been deduced from comparison with the left panel. The goddess of heaven, soaring above the king in the form of a vulture, touches his nose with the same symbol of salvation ("life, steadfastness, continuity") that is granted by the sun (placed vertically below the sun-disk).

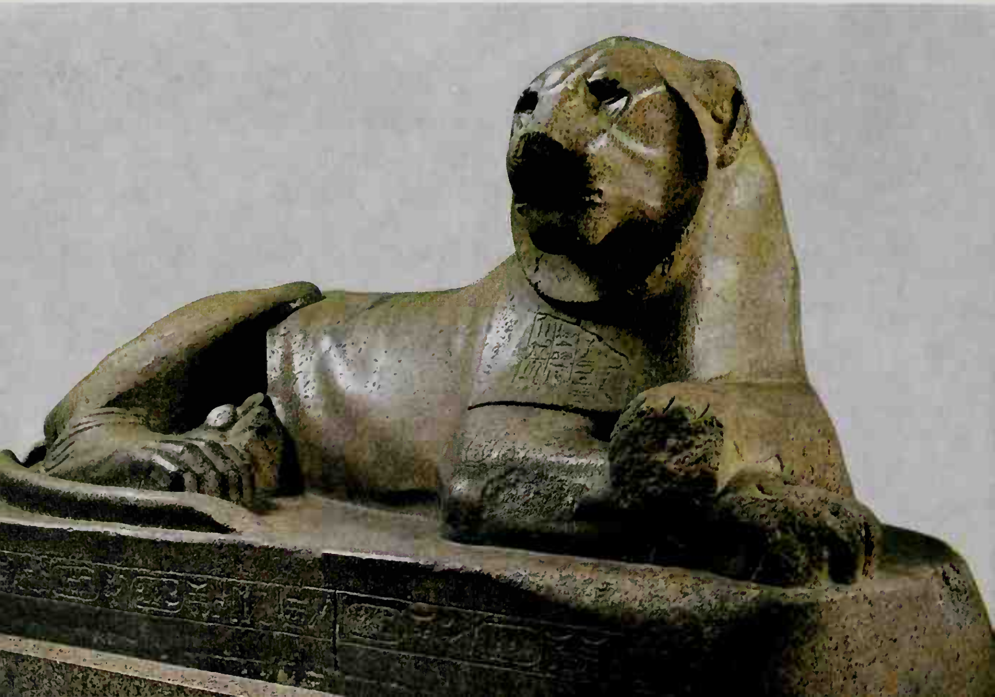


Section of the central panel of a stele of King Amenhotep III. Limestone, over-all height 81$^1/_2$", width of the section c. 25$^1/_2$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1380 B.C. From the mortuary temple of King Merenptah, where it was used as building material. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

By having himself portrayed as a lion, the king did not merely mean to symbolize the royal qualities that are shared by the king and this beast of prey, but probably also to convey a notion that goes much farther back: that the king can be the earthly manifestation of a lion-deity (just as he can assume, as Horus, the shape of the hawk, a bird of prey). The inscription on the animal's shoulder describes King Tutankhamon as a wild-looking lion who stares ferociously at his enemies should they dare to cross his path.

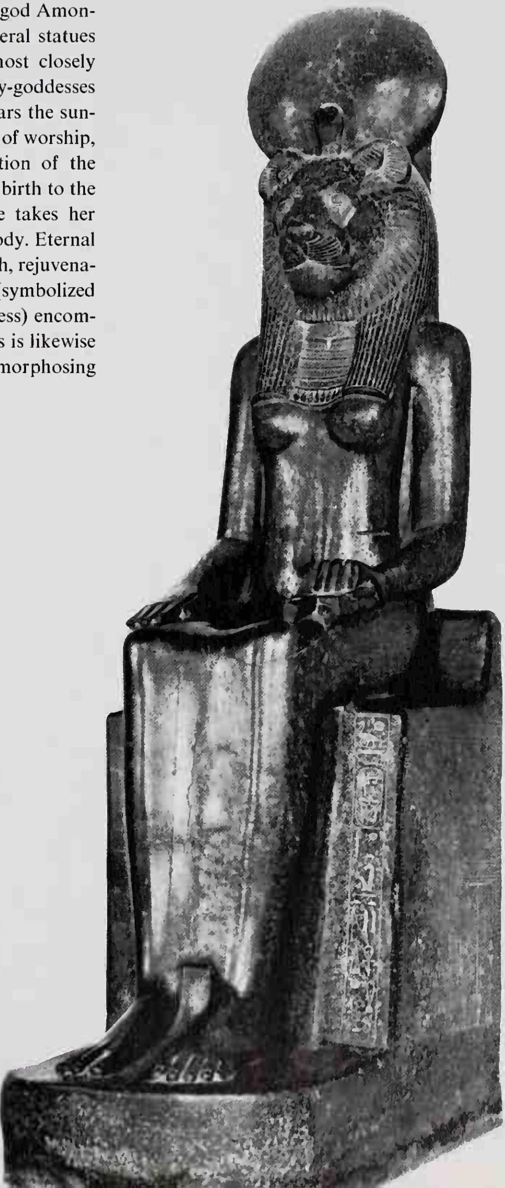
In this lion form—a pair was set up (the other bears inscriptions of King Amenhotep III) flanking the approach to the temple of Soleb—the king himself has taken over the functions of the guardian of the temple. The head, raised at a right angle to the body, stared at the person entering and was probably able to ward off any impious intruder by the mere power of his glance. Though one paw is extended toward the person entering, this position tends, not least because of the relaxed hindquarters, to give the effect rather of an outsize domestic cat, less ready to attack than those lions that lie fully stretched out.

The king as a lion. Granite, length of the base plate 83″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From Soleb in the Sudan, transported from there to Gebel Barkal. British Museum, London

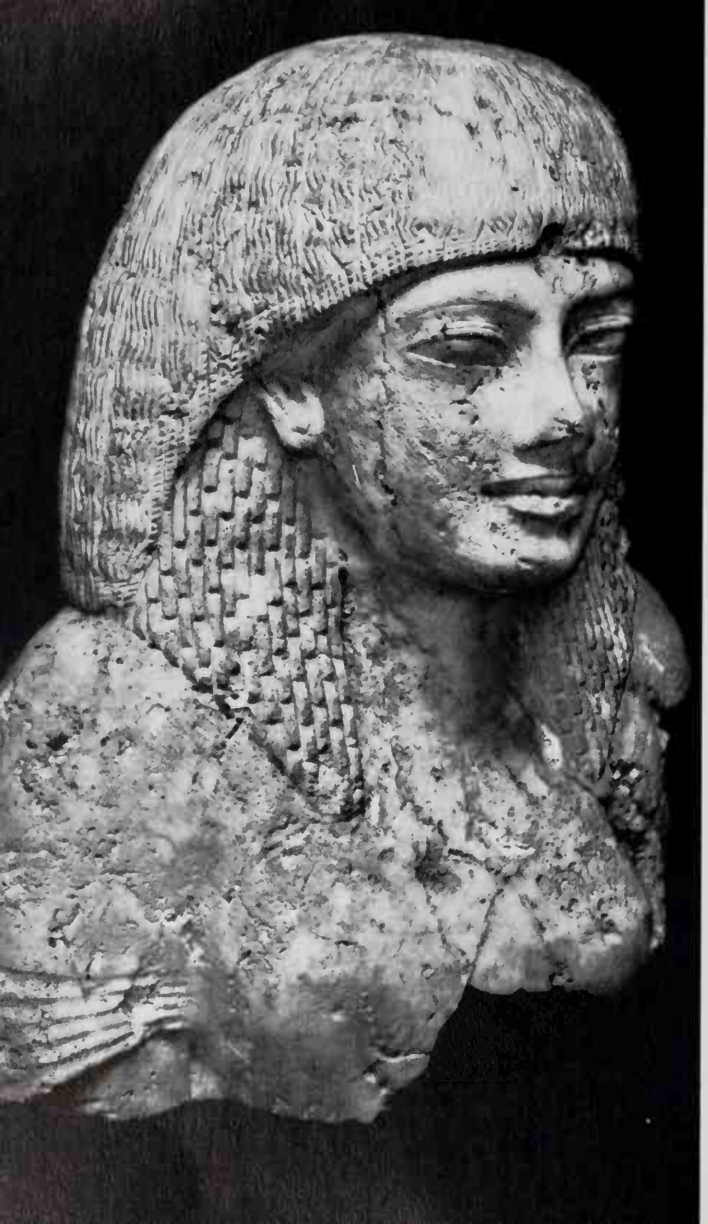


The vulture-goddess Mut, the consort of the sun-god Amon-Ra, gave shelter in her temple at Karnak to several statues of the lioness Sekhmet, with whom she was most closely associated as the sky-goddess. Like other great sky-goddesses (such as the cow-goddess Hathor), Sekhmet wears the sun-disk on her head. In Memphis, her principal place of worship, her son is called Nefertem and is a manifestation of the morning sun. Not only does the sky-goddess give birth to the sun and the other stars, but in due course she takes her children back, incorporating them into her own body. Eternal life arises from this continuous cycle of birth, death, rejuvenation in the womb, and rebirth. Power over life (symbolized here by the cross of life in the hand of the goddess) encompasses power over death. Thus, every sky-goddess is likewise a goddess of death or, more precisely, a metamorphosing agent who is able to nullify death.

An exaggeration or depreciation of this death aspect resulted in a narrowing of the functions of Sekhmet the lioness. She has become the messenger of death plain and simple, who carries men off in wars and plagues and sends out messengers that bring illness and death. A special ritual was celebrated to appease this goddess, whose name signifies the "Mighty One." The "Book of the Sky-Cow" reports an impending destruction of mankind by the sky-goddess in lioness form; here, again, two manifestations of the same sky-deity, the cow and the lioness, are linked together.

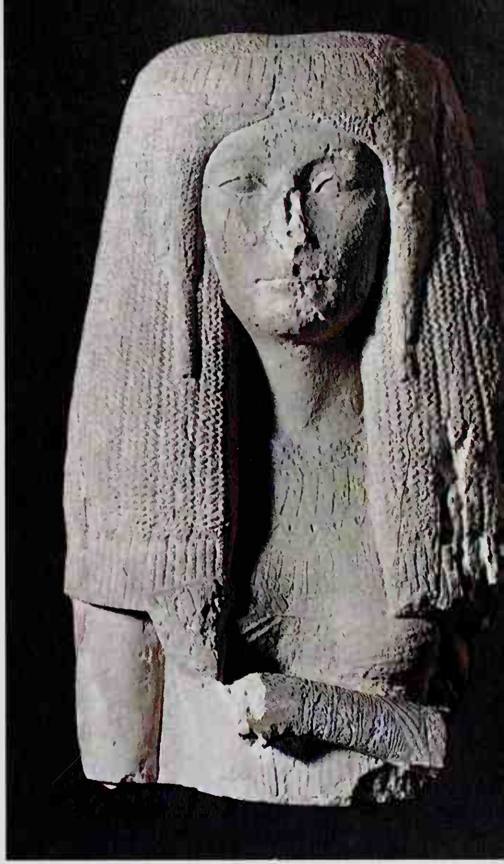


Seated figure of the goddess Sekhmet. Gray granite, height 90½". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1375 B.C. From the temple of the goddess Mut at Karnak. The Louvre, Paris



Upper part of a statuary group. Limestone, height of the fragment $11^3/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1370 B.C. Presumably from Thebes. Art Gallery, Birmingham

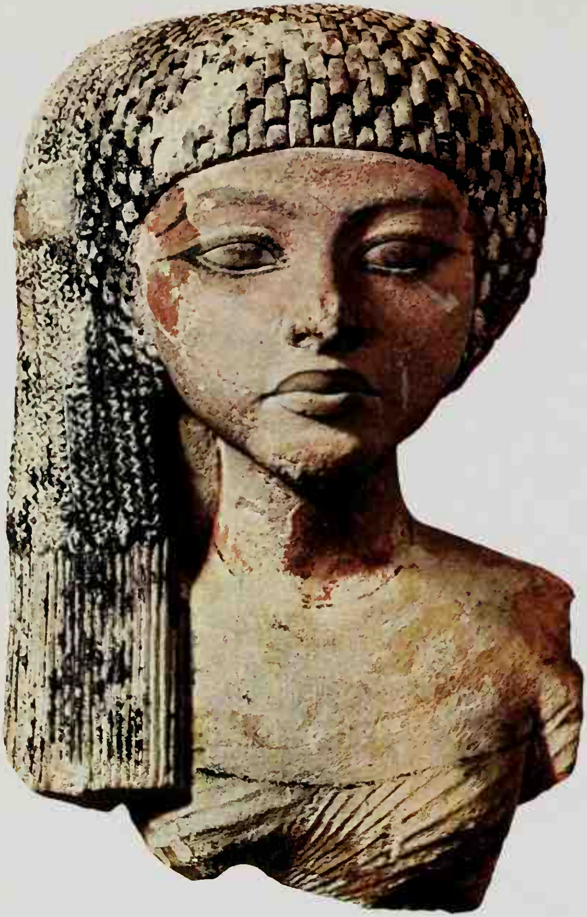
Upper part of a statue of a woman. Limestone, height 19⁵/₈". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1335 B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence



The first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty was dominated by warring and conquering heroes, but ever since the reign of Amenhotep III the inclination to enjoy what they had achieved spread among the heirs of the empire. Conquest gives way to possessing and guarding; or, in other words, the masculine era is past, and feminine traits begin to predominate. The ardent veneration of the beauties of life grows with the constantly increasing refinement of customs; a time of sentimentality sets in; emotional life is reflected in love songs. Works of art attain an admirable perfection of refinement and beauty in this period, though this perfection sometimes comes precariously close to the edge of a sickly sweet decadence, providing a glimpse of the inner feelings of the upper classes in their life of luxury.

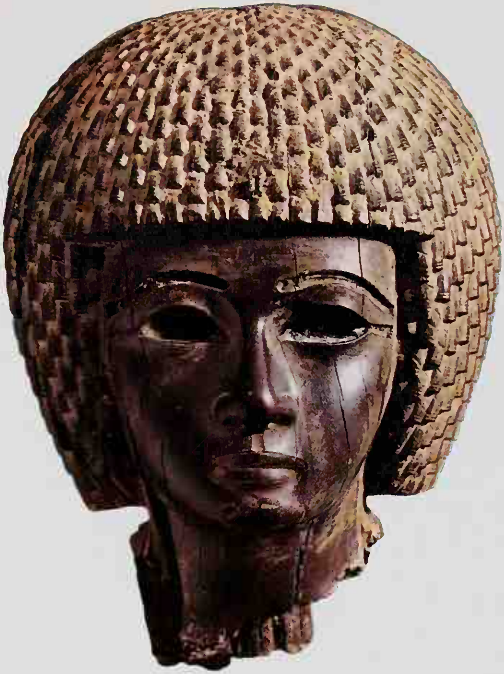
The fragment of the statue of an official on the facing page—once part of a group with his wife—displays unmistakably effeminate traits: narrow, round shoulders; swelling breasts; weak facial features. This impression is reinforced by the elaborate coiffure and the pleated robe.

The aristocratic lady (above), with her overabundant hairstyle and broad necklace, with a lotus bloom in her hand and a wreath of flowers on her head, is no less elegant. Her face likewise is full of feeling. But in contrast to the man, whose youthful features seem to radiate cheerful confidence, the woman's countenance, with features that are not so young, is clouded over with seriousness and resignation. It has been suggested that the realization of approaching age and the pain of losing, after many years, her glowing beauty are stamped upon these features.



Head of a princess. Limestone, height $5^7/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1350 B.C. Presumably from Tell el Amarna. The Louvre, Paris

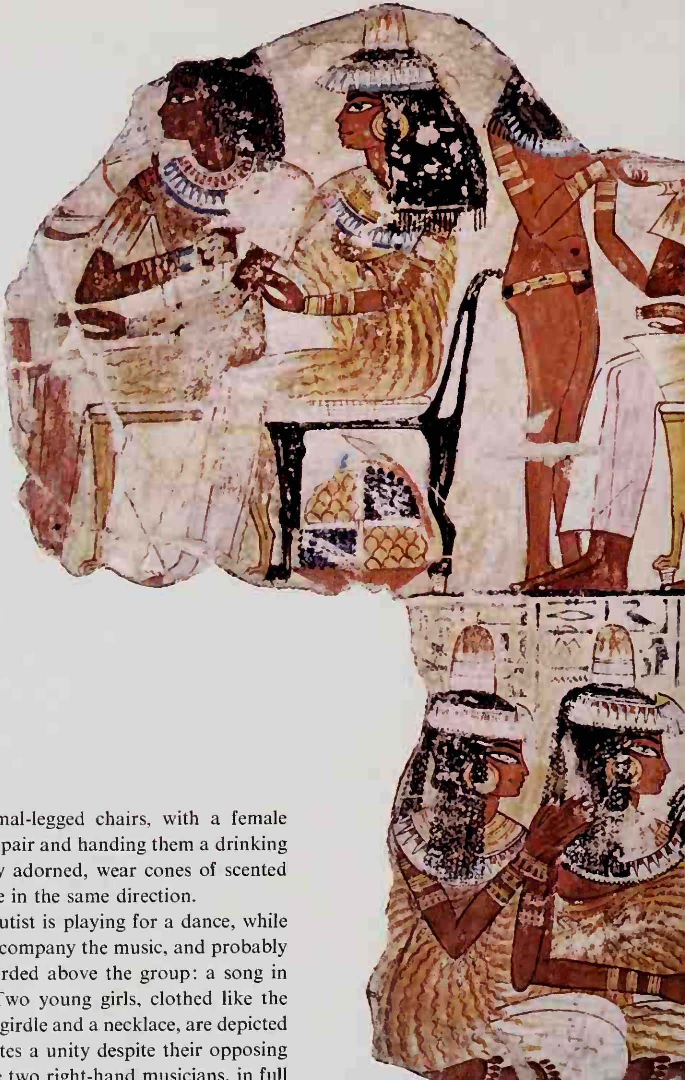
The strands of hair falling on one side of the otherwise bald head—an indication of royal parentage—has been combined here with an adult hairstyle into an attractive coiffure that frames the young lady's face. The features of this princess depict better than words can, with their expression of charm, arrogance, and satiety, the emotional world of a highly cultivated, spoiled, aristocratic youngster.



Head of a king or a prince. Acacia wood, height $5^1/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1410 B.C. From Thebes. Kofler-Truniger Collection, Lucerne

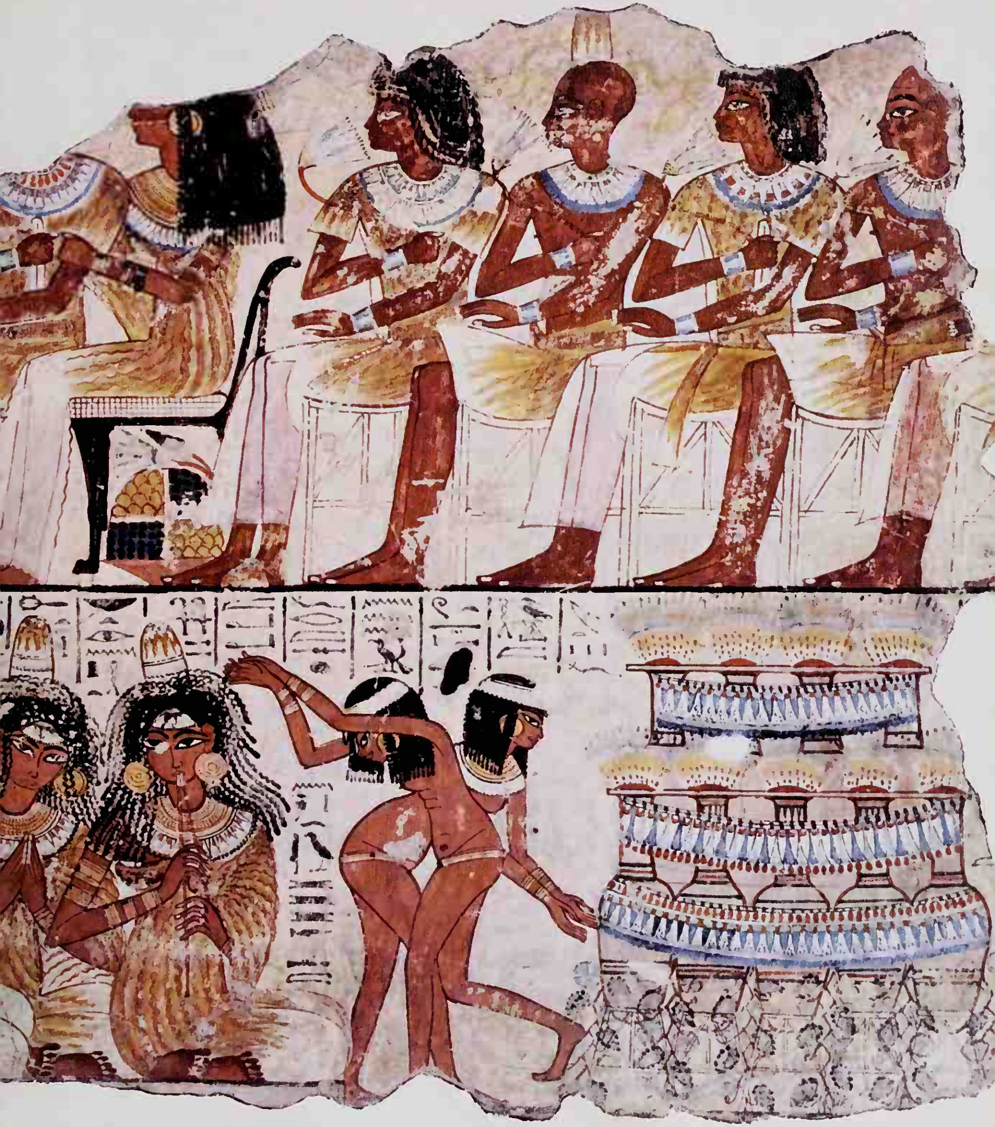
Despite the absence of the inlaid eyes and eyebrows (which were probably made of paste, to judge from the vestiges that remain), this little head, with its regular, youthful features, is one of the masterpieces of wood carving. A little silver pin above the forehead indicates that a uraeus snake was once fixed there as the emblem of a king or a prince.

Fragment of a banqueting scene. Painting on stucco, length of the fragment c. 39½". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1400 B.C. From the tomb of Neb-amon in Thebes. British Museum, London

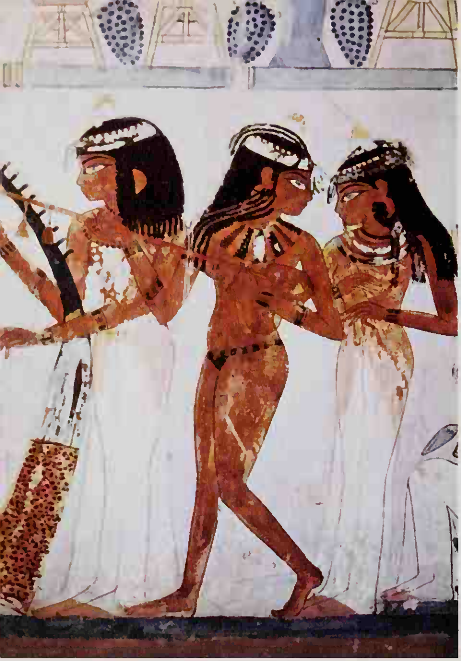


The banquet reproduced in the tomb is a modernized form of the earlier dining-table scene, which showed the dead at his feast of offerings (see page 32). The guests at the banquet are seated together in pairs or in groups, still in the archaic attitude: their left hands outstretched toward the food; their right hands clasping the loop of life or a lotus flower, which has the same significance. The upper register shows two married couples seated on animal-legged chairs, with a female servant standing in front of each pair and handing them a drinking bowl. All the guests are festively adorned, wear cones of scented unguent on their heads, and gaze in the same direction.

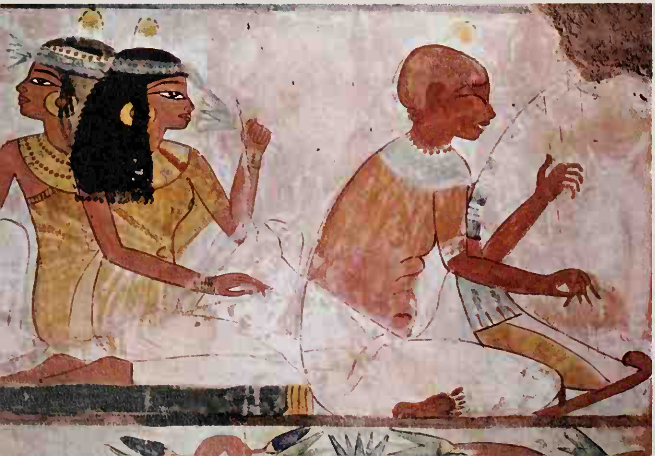
In the lower register, a girl flutist is playing for a dance, while three other girls clap hands to accompany the music, and probably sing the song whose text is recorded above the group: a song in praise of nature's fruitfulness. Two young girls, clothed like the servants in nothing but a narrow girdle and a necklace, are depicted in a lively dance, which constitutes a unity despite their opposing movements. The portrayal of the two right-hand musicians, in full face, is as unusual as the emphatic overlapping of the dancers. Jars of wine, crowned with flowers, are stacked up at the right.

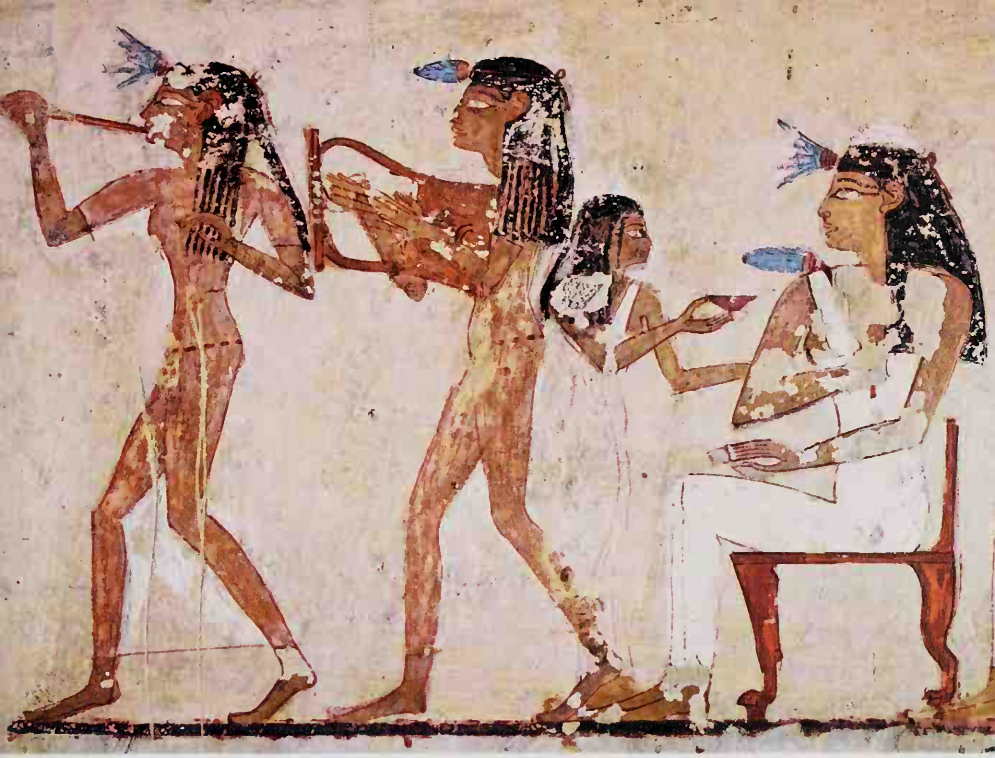


A little orchestra of young girls plays for the entertainment of the guests at a banquet. A dancer moves between the girl playing a double flute and the harpist, accompanying herself on a lute. Compared to the two musicians, who are portrayed in the conventional manner, the unusual portrait of the dancer is striking: her legs are moving toward the right, her head is turned to the left, and her body occupies a position between these two directions, being turned to the spectator.



Musicians, harpists, and young girls at a banquet. Paintings on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1420 B.C. In the tomb of Nakht at Thebes (No. 52)

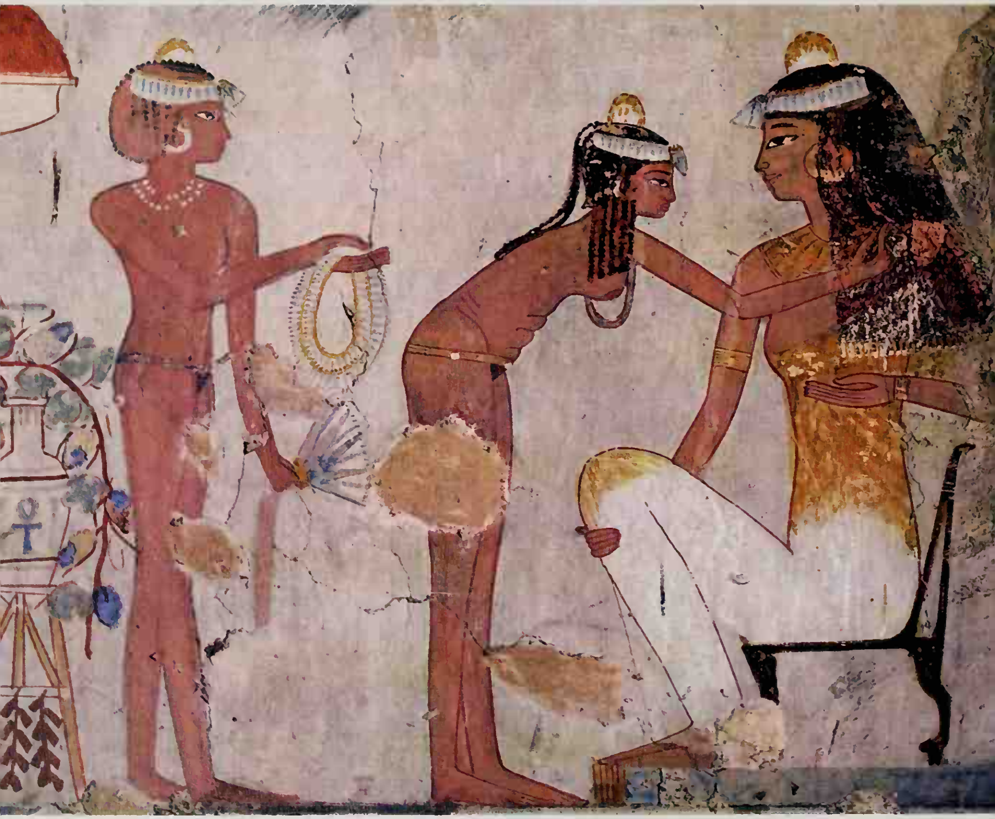




Musicians at a banquet. Painting on smoothed limestone, approximate size of the detail 13$^3/_4$ × 19$^1/_2$″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1450 B.C. In the tomb of Wah at Thebes (No. 22)

◀ A group of young girls squats on a rush mat (facing page). The adult banquet guests are solemnly seated on chairs or stools (see page 115), but this decorous posture is dissolved into graceful dalliance in these girls. Only the girl sitting nearest the harpist seems to be listening to his song and to be reflecting on his summons to make the most of transient beauty as she smells a lotus flower. But the girl sitting alongside and behind her is distracted: she turns to her neighbor (off the left of the picture) and shows her a peach. The blind harpist sits on the floor with his back bent and his legs crossed under him, so that the sole of one foot is seen underneath his apron. He is opening his mouth to sing one of the harpist's songs that were popular at the time, which praised beauty and called on the listeners to enjoy life.

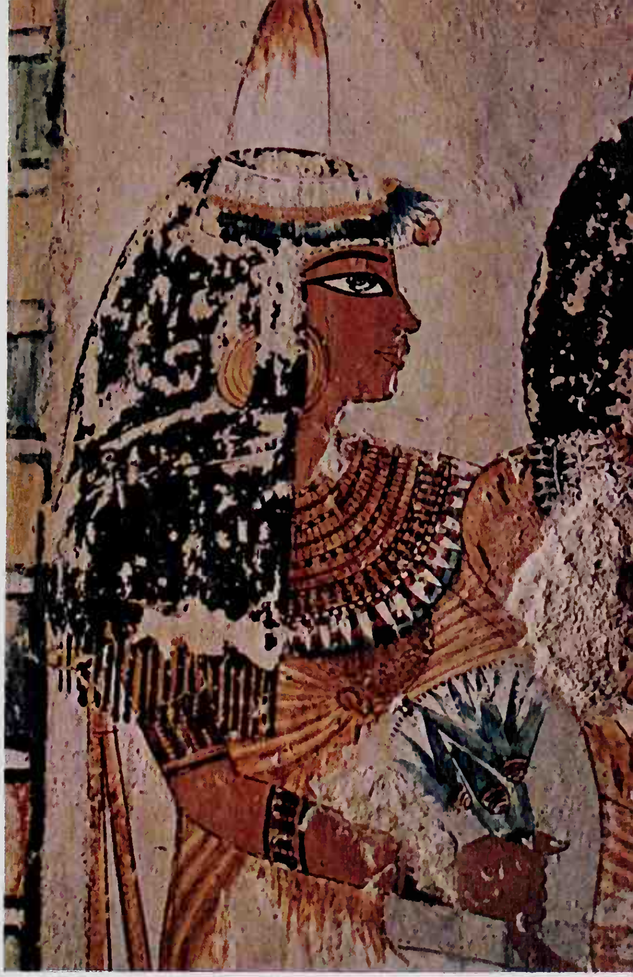
The literature of the dead hands down to us the desire of the deceased to be reunited with his family in the hereafter. The wall paintings of the private tombs at Thebes illustrate this wish and magically fulfill it. Still in the traditional posture of the dead in front of the offering table, though otherwise surrounded like a contemporary earthly host by members of his family and guests in ceremonial attire, as well as by musicians, dancers, and servants, the deceased celebrates his funerary meal. Just as the placing of offerings in the tomb united the deceased with his family as it performed the rites of the death cult (see page 65), the living now celebrate the "Festival in the Beautiful Desert Valley" in their kinsmen's tombs. The term "desert valley" denotes the world of tombs west of Thebes. During this festival night families are together once more, and the frontiers between life and death are broken down.



Lady at a banquet. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1410 B.C. In the tomb of Menena at Thebes (No. 69)

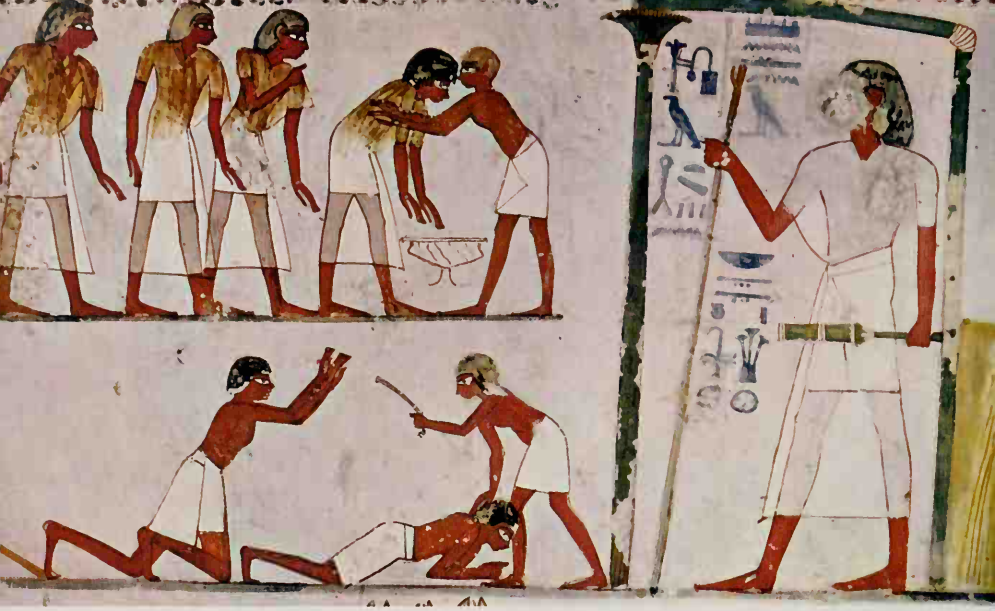
◀ Preparations for a banquet. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1410 B.C. In the tomb of Djeser-ka-ra-seneb at Thebes (No. 38)

Two servants attend a lady before a banquet (facing page). The one standing in front of her is arranging her long stranded wig, while the other hands her a wreath and a lotus flower. At the left there is a jar stand decorated with vine branches.

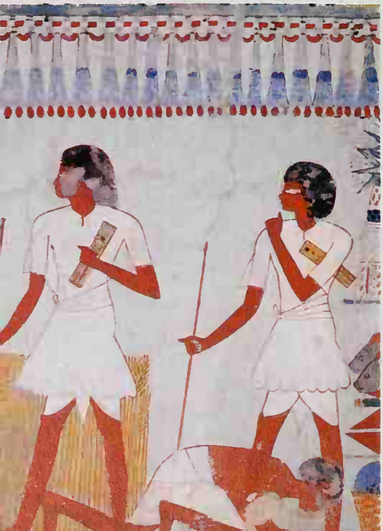


Joy in the beauty of the female body, and the sympathetic reproduction of this feeling have created this timeless ideal of feminine beauty.

In addition to the visual impressions, to which one's senses respond directly, the skilled observer can also sense the charm of perfume, for the unguent cone of scented resins placed on her head melts in the course of the night of feasting, impregnating the hair and clothing with fragrant essences. At the same time, the clothing, originally white, turns yellow.



The lord of the tomb supervising field work, and (below) government officials. Paintings on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1410 B.C. In the tomb of Menena at Thebes (No. 69)



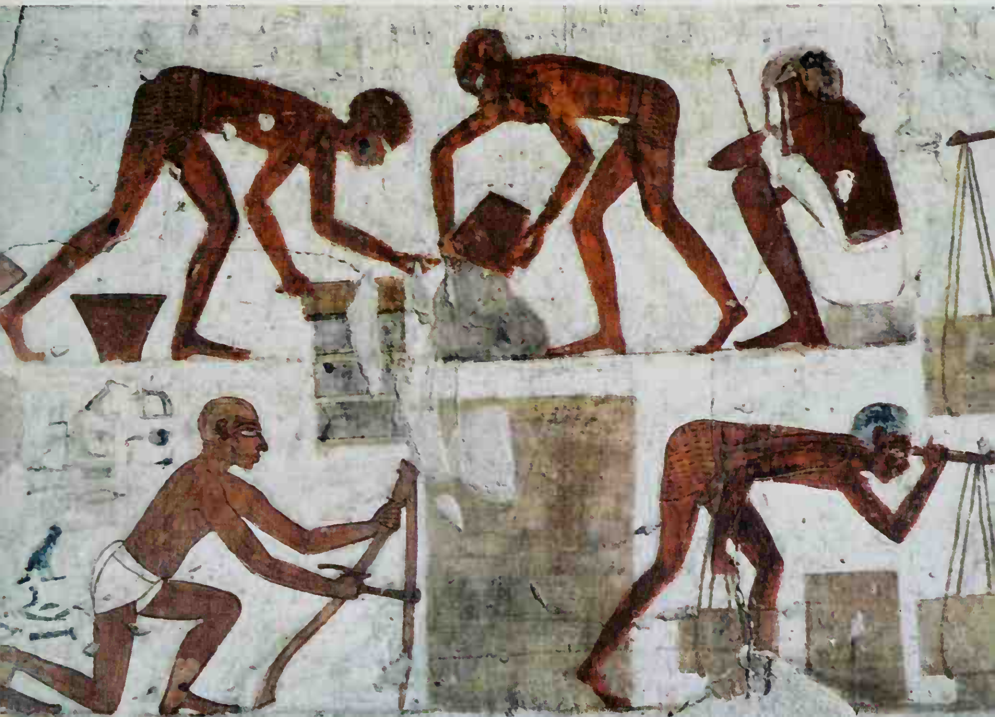
Once again, this life and the hereafter, life and death, are interwoven, with the portrayal of Menena (a "Field Scribe of the Lord of the Two Kingdoms," that is, a high official in the Ministry of Agriculture), who is depicted in his tomb engaged in his professional activity. On the one hand, these pictures are a memorial to his life, while on the other, these agricultural scenes are partly obligatory tomb scenes, since provision for the dead in the hereafter was based on agriculture and animal husbandry.

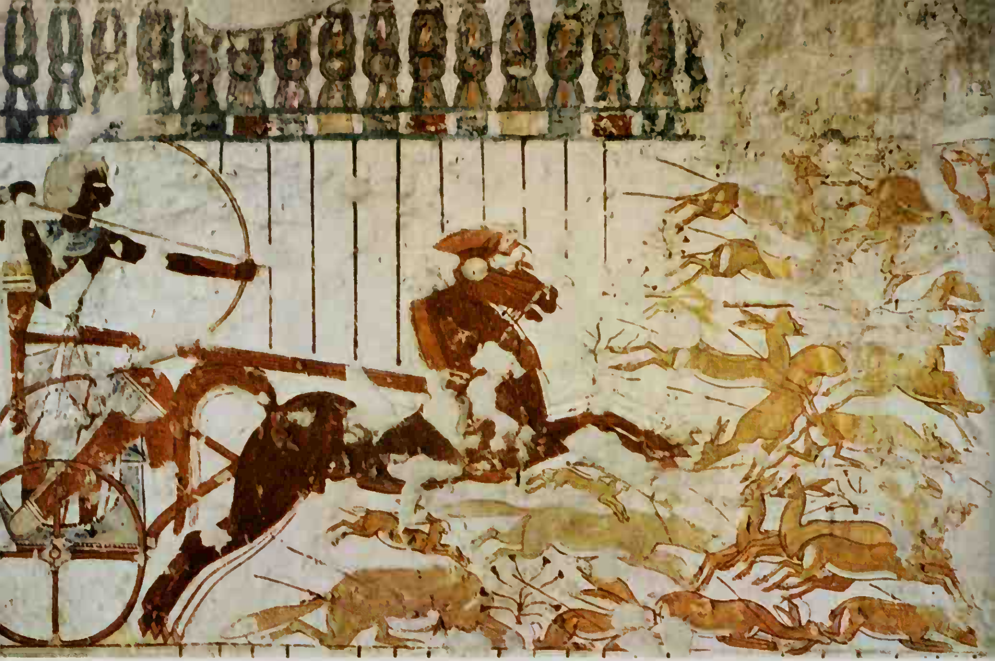
Subordinates and peasants (above) are led before the lord of the tomb, standing in a bower. One peasant is being beaten as punishment for having failed to deliver grain or for not having delivered enough. Another is on his knees, imploring to be spared punishment.

In contrast to the rural population, simply clothed and crouching on the ground, the tax and land-registry officials, carrying their writing tablets, are dressed as fashionably adorned city dwellers (left).

In one of the most important tombs of the Theban necropolis, with some three hundred square yards of wall paintings, are depicted scenes of the construction of a temple wall of the time of Tuthmosis III—a task with which the Vizier Rekhmira had been charged. A group of workmen is seen manufacturing the bricks needed for building a ramp. A gray-haired man (light-skinned and blue-eyed, and therefore doubtless non-Egyptian), with hair on chin and chest and wearing a white loincloth, is digging up the clay with a mattock. Above him, the ready-mixed clay is being poured into molds for shaping into bricks. After the bricks have been laid out in rows to dry in the sun, they are carried off to the building site. Finally, an overseer is seen squatting on the ground, urging the men on to work.

Brickmakers at work. Painting on stucco, height of detail 19″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1435 B.C. In the tomb of the Vizier Rekhmira in Thebes (No. 100)



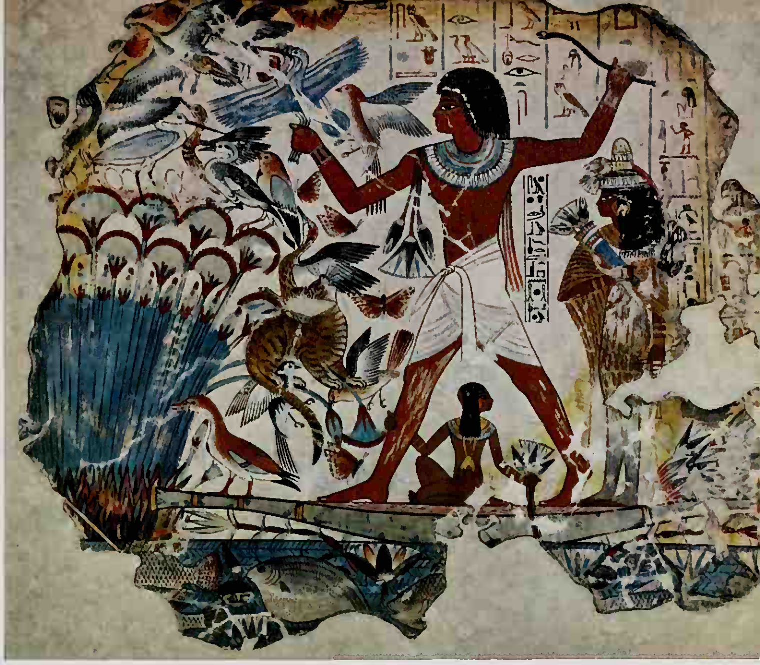


Hunting in the desert. Painting on smoothed limestone, approximate length of this section 55″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1430 B.C. In the tomb of Userhet at Thebes (No. 56)

Userhet's full-time occupation was to handle the correspondence of King Amenhotep II. Following the example of his royal master, who was a celebrated archer and charioteer (see page 106), he apparently liked to go hunting. At all events, he had himself painted in the pose of the Pharaoh (see page 157) as an archer on a war chariot. He has wound the reins of the galloping horses around his body, and reaches for one arrow after another from the quivers on his back and on the body of the chariot, shooting them at the panic-stricken animals. Some of the quarry has been mortally wounded already, such as the hyena lying on the ground beneath the horses; others seek safety in flight.

Over and beyond reality, slaying the animals of the desert signified to the Egyptians their victory over evil and hostile powers. Thus, every picture may have several layers of meaning, and we always have to ask ourselves, especially when these pictures are utilized in the cult of the dead, what other statements can be read into them. The motif of the "flying gallop" is considered to be an import from the Aegean; the horse and chariot, however, were brought into Egypt by the Hyksos (see page 98).

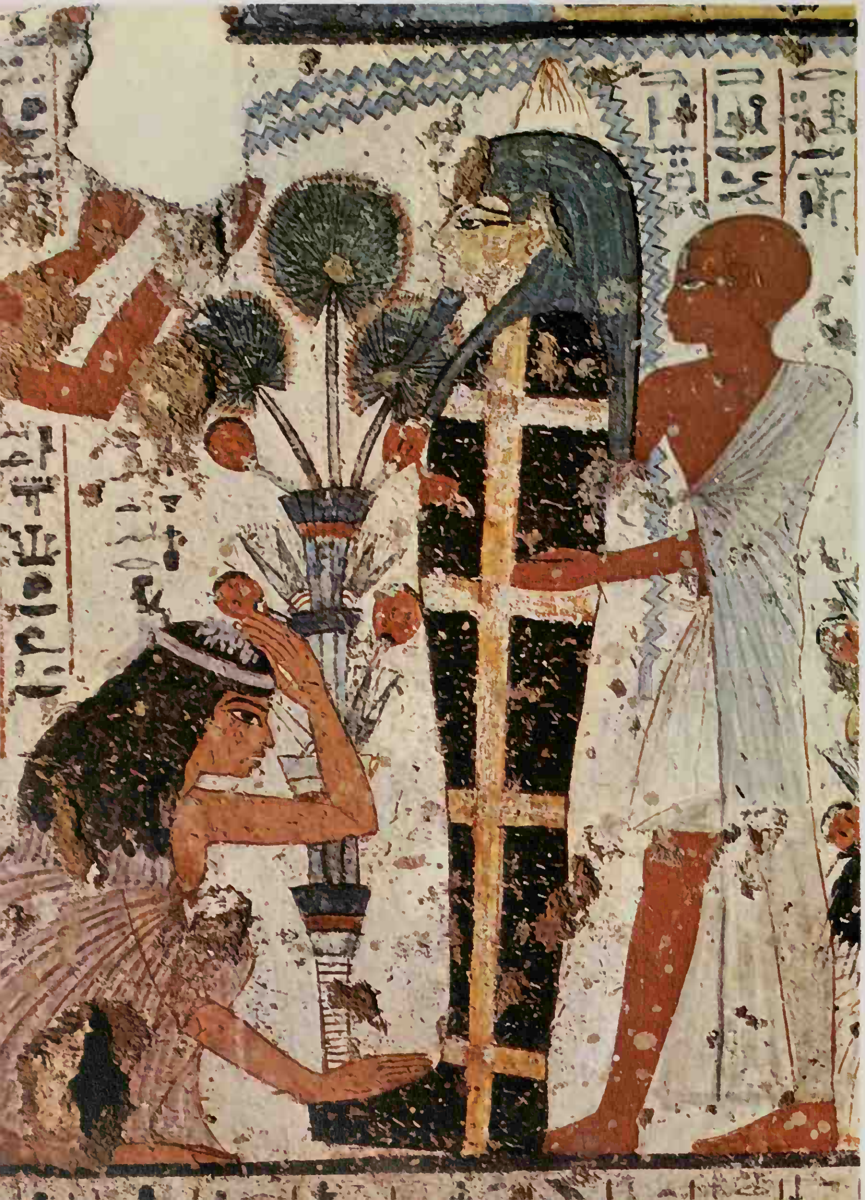
The tomb of Userhet was never completed. Otherwise the hieroglyphic inscriptions, the columns for which were already outlined, might have provided us with more information.

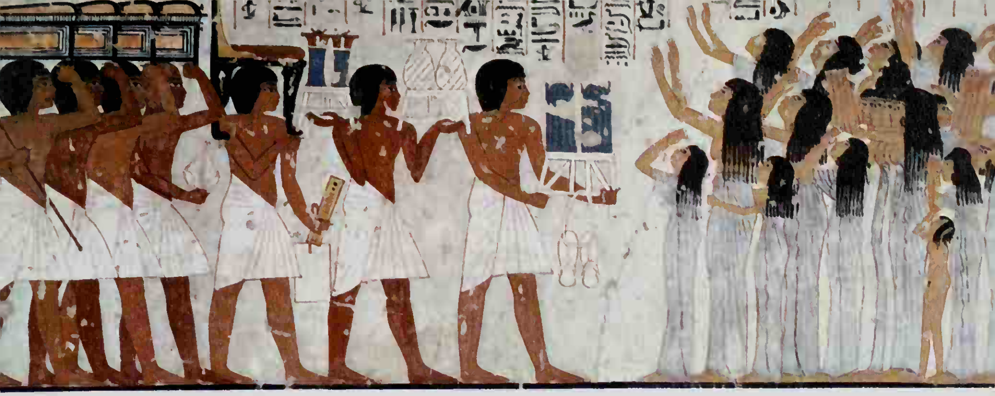


Hunting birds with a throwing stick in a papyrus thicket. Painting on stucco, size of the fragment $32^5/_8 \times 38''$. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1400 B.C. From the tomb of Neb-amon at Thebes. British Museum, London

Standing in a light papyrus skiff, the lord of the tomb travels through the fields of papyrus, accompanied by his wife and daughter. In his left hand, the hunter brandishes his throwing stick against the birds, which fly up from their nests in fright, while his right holds three herons. Butterflies fly about; an African wildcat exploits the general disturbance among the birds and seizes part of the bag; a goose stands at the bow of the skiff as a decoy; a shoal of fish in the water accompanies the voyage of the boat. Thus, this is a picture showing the lord of the tomb and his family on a pleasant hunting trip, such as may have occurred in everyday life when the dwellers in the big cities went to the countryside to enjoy the beauties of nature. It would appear that they wanted to preserve this mood for endless repetition in the hereafter.

The inscription between the husband and wife appears at first sight to confirm this view—"enjoying oneself, viewing the beautiful"—though the postscript "at the place of the constant renewal of life" implies that concerns of eternal life are involved. The other inscriptions state that the bird hunter is serving the goddess of the fields and is thus performing a ritual act. The wife's festive clothing, with an unguent cone on her head (cf. page 119) seems to bear this out, and in particular, the ritual instruments she holds in her left hand, the sistrum and menit, which were the preferred instruments used in the worship of Hathor, the goddess of love.



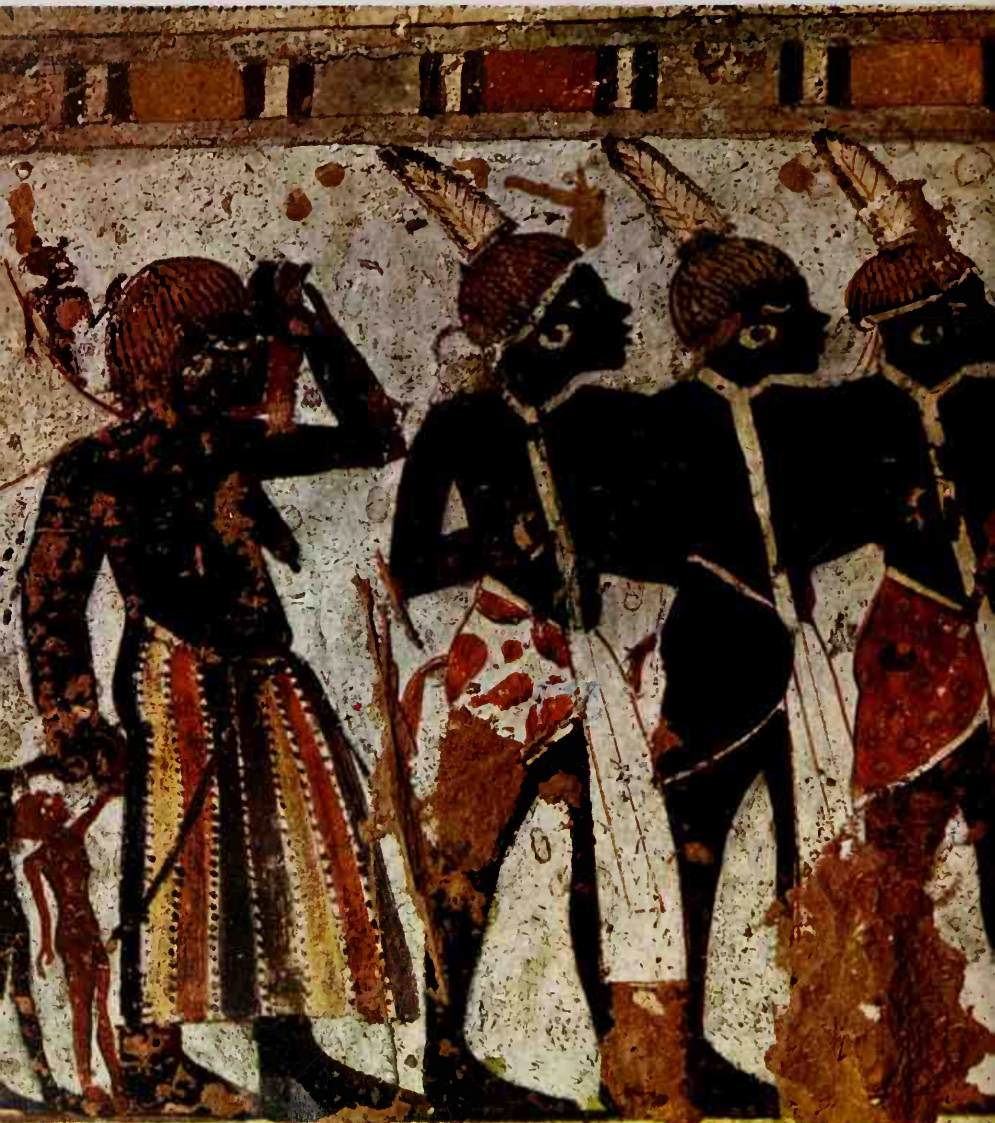


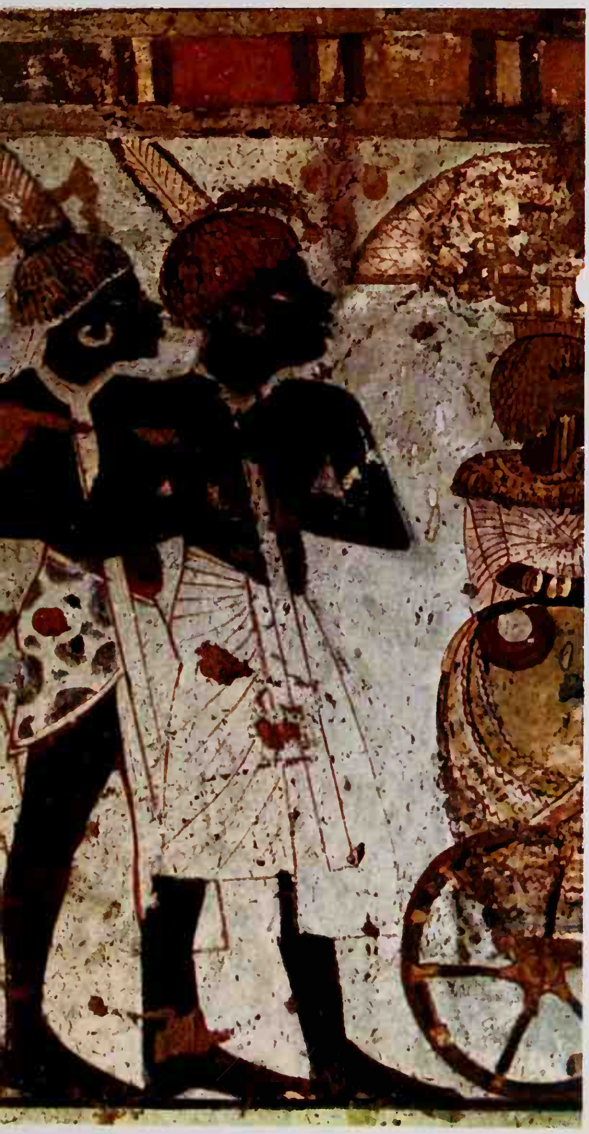
Lamenting women. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1365 B.C. In the tomb of Ramose at Thebes (No. 55)

The pictures of burial rites are in sharp contrast to the scenes of the funerary meal, which show the lord of the tomb in the gay, sometimes boisterous company of his family: grief has succeeded joy, and separation the sense of togetherness. Just as the feelings of happy enjoyment are expressed more clearly than before, artists have now captured the feelings of passionate grief in such moving scenes as these.

◀ Widow lamenting before the mummy of her husband. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1365 B.C. In the tomb of the sculptors Neb-amon and Ipuky at Thebes (No. 181)

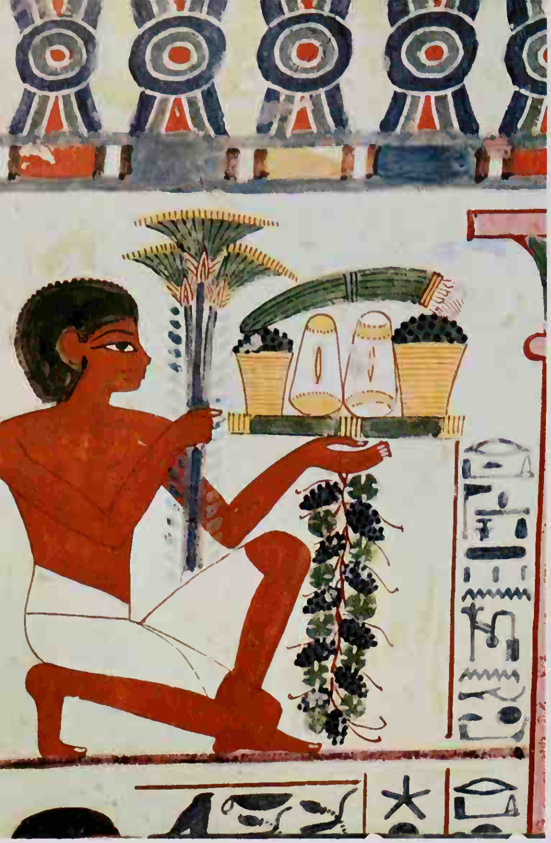
While one priest holds the mummy upright, another performs the "opening-of-the-mouth" ceremony, which magically revives statues and mummies. He administers purifying water, which runs over the mummy in wavy lines. The dead man's wife crouches at the feet of the mummy, which is wrapped in flowered bindings. She has laid one hand on its feet, either to prevent or cause the implied tilting movement. With her other hand she strews dust on her head; her mouth is opened for the lament for the dead.





Huy was viceroy of Nubia under Tutankhamon, and was thus responsible for the delivery of the tribute to the government. He had this Nubian deputation depicted in his tomb: Nubian bearers of gifts, in Egyptian and native costume, follow a black princess, who is elegantly dressed in the Egyptian fashion and rides on an Egyptian chariot (unfortunately, the team of plump oxen drawing the racy vehicle is no longer visible). At the end of the procession is a wet nurse, who is probably bringing Nubian princelings to be raised at the Pharaoh's court (and to serve as hostages of a sort). She pulls two children along by her strong hand and carries the third in a basket on her back.

Procession of Nubians bringing tribute. Painting on clay plaster, height of the detail 25$^5/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. In the tomb of Huy at Thebes (No. 40)

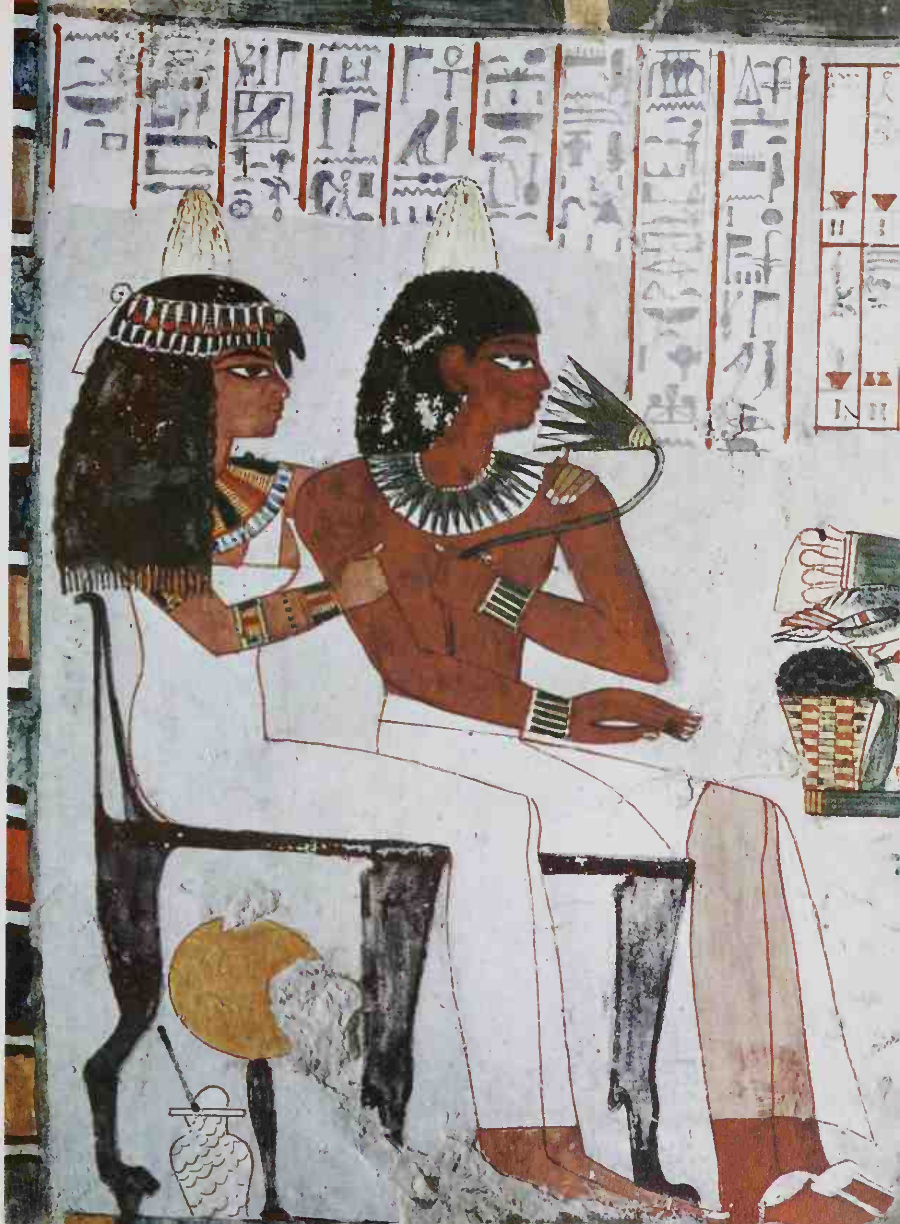


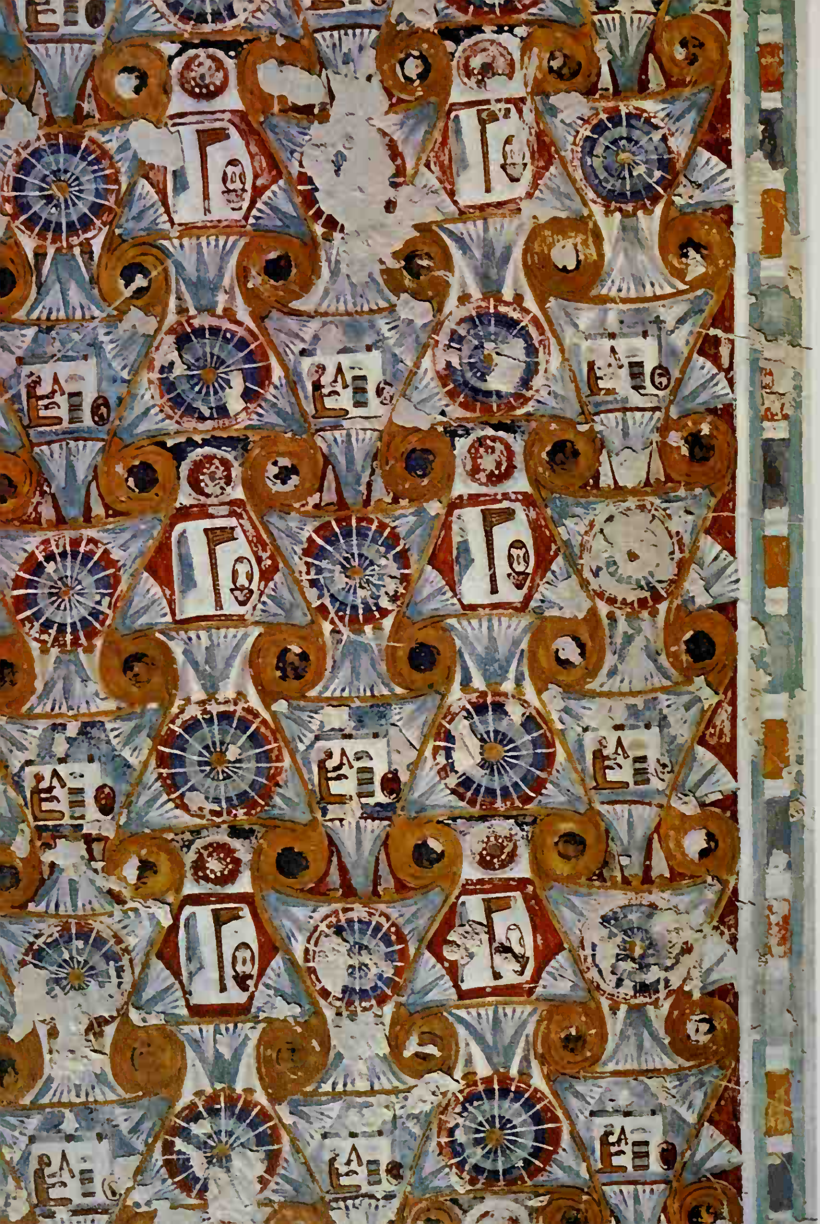
Servant with offerings. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1420 B.C. In the tomb of Nakht at Thebes

The inscription alongside the servant (left) offering a mat with fruit and grapes as well as a papyrus bouquet reads: "Bringing offerings for the scribe Nakht."

The parents of the lord of the tomb at the offering meal. Painting on stucco. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1380 B.C. In the tomb of Pa-iry at Thebes (No. 139) ▶

This combination of the scene of the festively adorned couple seated at the feast with the older elements of the cult of the dead—the dining table, the list of offerings, and the offertory (cf. pages 32, 65, 66)—indicates that the banquet scene of the Theban tombs is the secularized descendant of the older dining-table scene, and thus depicts the provision of food offerings for the dead. The deceased still has one hand outstretched toward the food, while the other clasps a symbol of the renewal of life, the lotus flower in this instance (cf. page 82). The list of offerings above the table tells how many of the various gifts have been brought (denoted here by the numerical signs for 1 and 2). The offertory appeals to Amon-Ra and Osiris and prays for "all the bread, beer, cattle, birds on Amon's table; all good, pure things on which a god lives," for the offerings are dedicated to the vital force (*ka*) of the man adjudged blessed by the court of the dead. The last column gives the title of his wife: "His Sister, the Mistress of the House."



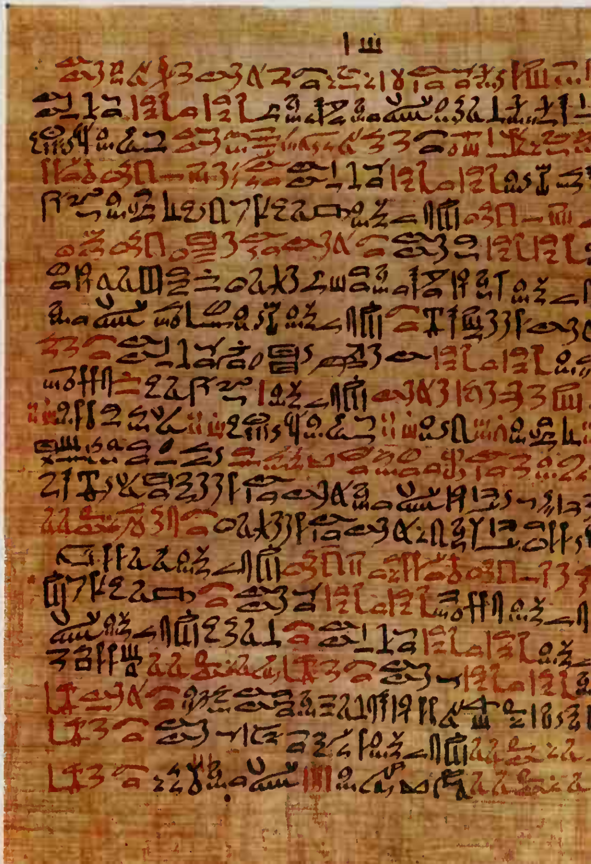


◀ Ornamental ceiling painting. New Kingdom, end of Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1330 B.C. In the tomb of Neferhotep at Thebes (No. 50)

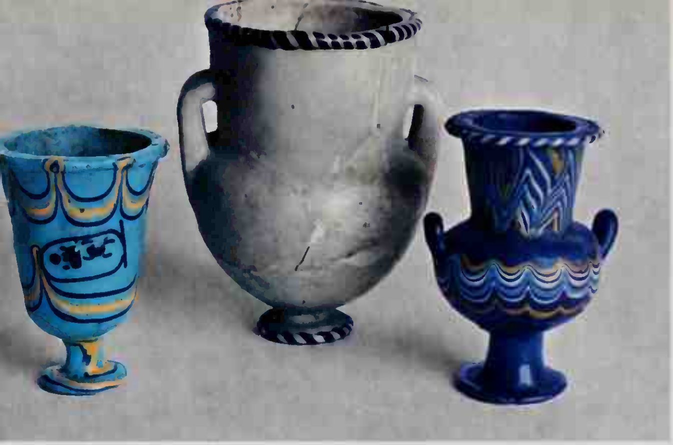
The titles and name of the lord of the tomb are interwoven with the regular sequence of individual ornaments (rosettes and lotus flowers). The spirals linked together in all four directions give to the whole design its sense of cohesion and the character of a cosmic system with ever-recurring events, within the cycle of which the dead man might be placed.

The Ebers Papyrus, sixty-five feet long and containing a total of 108 numbered columns with nearly nine hundred prescriptions and diagnoses, is not only the most extensive medical manuscript, and thus a mine of information for historians of medicine, but is no less famous as a masterpiece of calligraphy. The spiritedly written hieroglyphs in the cursive form (called "hieratic") have a charm of their own that goes beyond their function as letters, not only in the individual symbols and their arrangement, but also in the different colors of ink employed: black for the ordinary text and red to emphasize headings or other important comments. They show that the exquisite taste of the time and the liking for beauty of form was manifested even in so sober a text as this medical handbook.

The Ebers Papyrus gives us information concerning many diseases, methods of treatment, drugs, and magic charms. Column 61 (which is read from right to left like every ancient Egyptian text) contains prescriptions for treating the eye, mainly those for "opening the sight." These are remedies for improving vision by mixtures of drugs, which were spread on the eyelids.



Column 61 of the Ebers Medical Papyrus. Papyrus, height 11$^3/_4$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1550 B.C. University Library, Leipzig

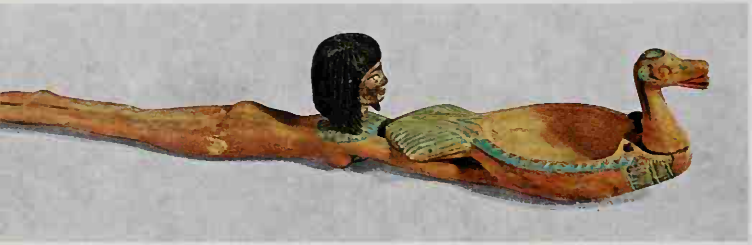


Colored glass vases. Heights: $3^1/_8$" (left), $3^3/_8$" (right), $4^1/_2$" (center). New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1450 B.C. (left); c. 1350 B.C. (right); Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1250 B.C. (center). Probably from Thebes (left) and Tell el Amarna (right). State Collection of Egyptian Art, Munich

Taste and delight in beautiful forms and vivid colors mark the style of the implements that are, in reality, miniature works of art.

The drinking cup (on the left, above) and both of the two-handled vases (this form is called *krateriskos*) probably come from the royal table, or may have been presented by the king as a special gift; for glass manufacture appears to have been a royal monopoly, as may be inferred from the site of the workshops, and as is suggested by the presence of the king's name on the vessels (the cup at the left has the throne name of King Tuthmosis III applied in glass threads). The vessels were made by rotating a core of clayey sand in molten glass, or else by covering the core with numerous glass threads until a solid wall of glass was produced over it.

The unguent spoon (below) in the shape of a naked girl, swimming and holding on to a duck, is charming in its execution. The duck, which held the unguent, could be closed by hinged wing covers. This motif reappears in several variations, recalling the bathing girl in the Late Egyptian love lyrics. Yet the derivation of the motif from the world of mythological images cannot be excluded: this may be a strongly secularized metamorphosis of one element in the cult of Hathor.

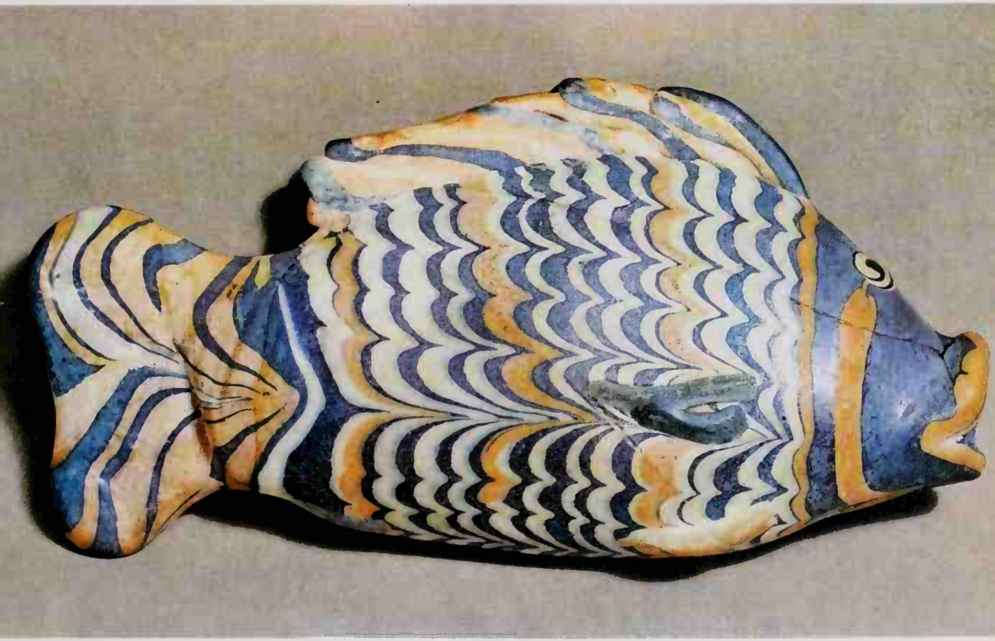


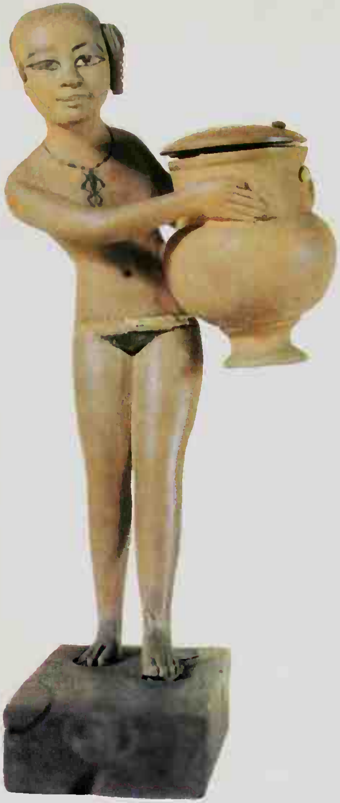
Decorated spoon for unguent. Wood, length $11^3/_4$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1370 B.C. From Abu Gurob (Faiyum). Egyptian Museum, Cairo

This vase was made of glass, employing the same techniques as those used for the vessels on page 132: filaments of glass in a different color were placed on the glass body, which was initially of one solid color. These were drawn out while heated by means of a comblike tool into the wavy lines we see, and were then fused to the base.

The fish as a motif of small works of art poses the problem of the part played by the fish in ancient Egyptian religion and mythology. As this vase was certainly not intended to depict one of the many proscribed fishes (which could have been magically destroyed by smashing the vase), we have to consider a positive role for the fish, possibly analogous to that assigned to the prehistoric fish-shaped cosmetic palettes. These cosmetic palettes were probably used in cult rites to strengthen the sun, regarded as the eye of an animal (cf. pages 18, 19). The sun had to pass through the primeval sea during the night to return to the point where it rises, and during this voyage it made use of a fish shape or of fishes as traveling companions. Another way of surviving this voyage was to be swallowed by a fish and conveyed, inside its belly, to the eastern horizon. As the "Swallower of the Sun" the reputation of the fish became so bad that for a time it was considered to be unclean and harmful and was not utilized in ritual worship. Only in the New Kingdom do the religious texts describe the role of the fish as the sun's companion during its nocturnal voyage.

Glass fish-shaped vase. Colored glass, length $5^1/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1350 B.C. From Amarna. British Museum, London





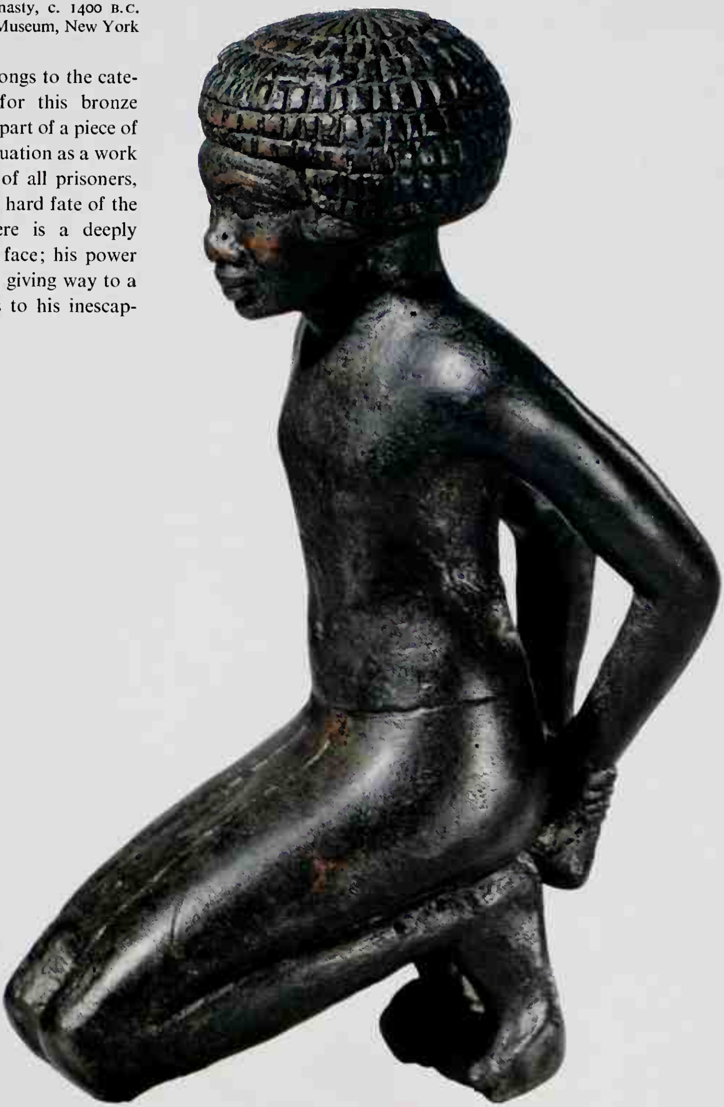
Female servant carrying an unguent jar. Boxwood, height $5^{1}/_{8}$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1370 B.C. Probably from a tomb at Thebes. The Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art, University of Durham

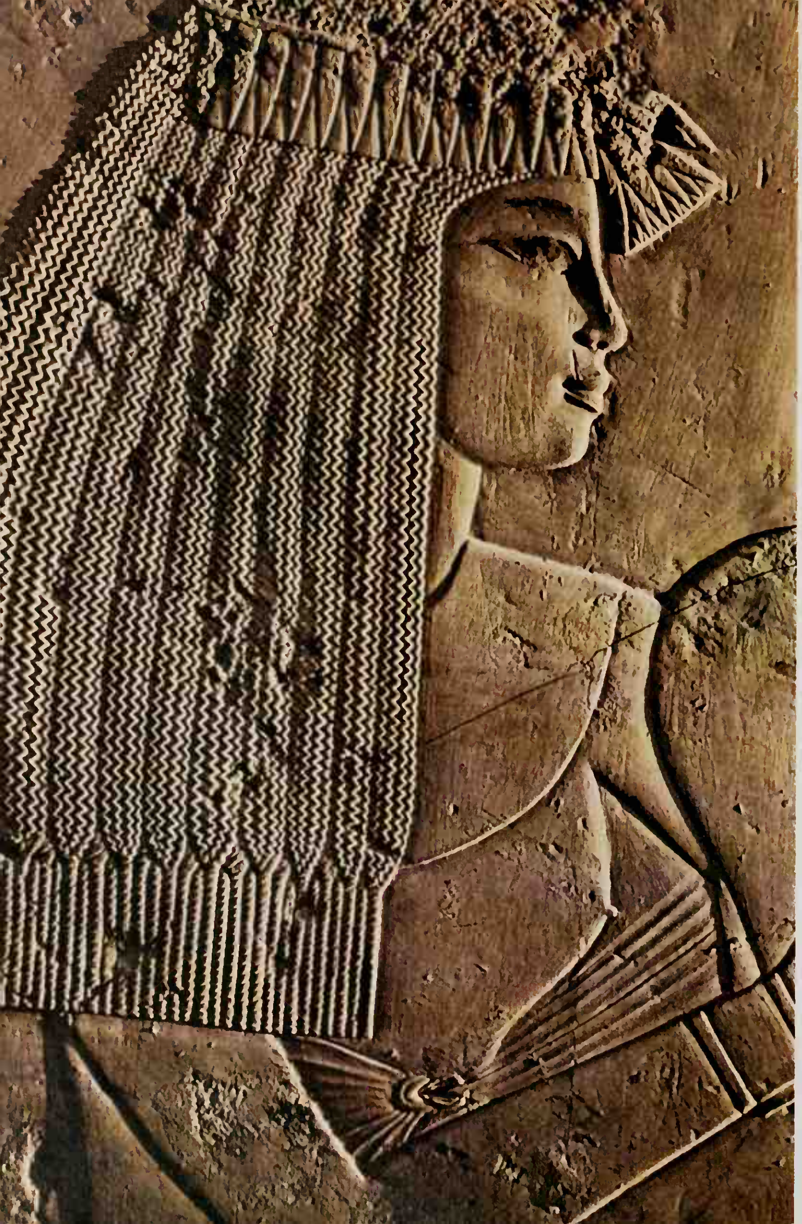
The amalgamation of handicraft and art, of an article of daily use and a work of art, is especially clear in this charming piece. The unguent jar, which is the primary element from the user's point of view, has been made a subordinate part of a harmonious whole by the artistic design of the servant, who holds or carries the jar.

The whole posture of the young girl, a Negress, who wears nothing but a girdle and is adorned with the youthful lock of hair and an amulet of the god Bes, is dictated by the weight of the unguent jar. Her right foot, set back somewhat, bears the load resting on her left hip; her sloping, backward-curving shoulders, turned toward the jar, also indicate something of the weight on the hands that hold it. Notwithstanding this realistic posture, which expresses the effort of carrying in every detail, her charm is preserved, so that she seems to be offering her unguent jar with an almost playful ease.

Captive Nubian. Bronze, height $5^{1}/_{2}$″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1400 B.C. From Saqqara. Brooklyn Museum, New York

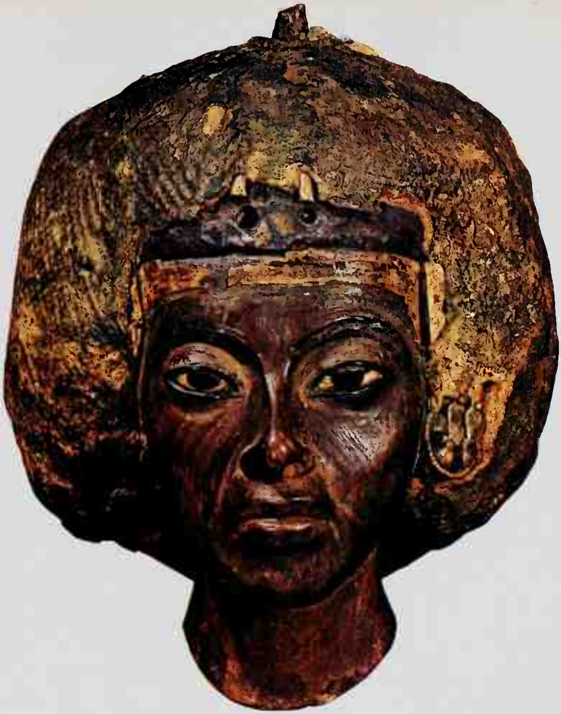
Although it rightly belongs to the category of handicrafts, for this bronze statuette was probably part of a piece of furniture, it merits evaluation as a work of art. Representative of all prisoners, the figure bemoans the hard fate of the prisoner of war. There is a deeply moving sadness in his face; his power to resist seems broken, giving way to a humble submissiveness to his inescapable fate.





◀ Lady at a funerary banquet. Detail of a wall relief. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1365 B.C. In the tomb of Ramose at Thebes

The mature, overrefined style of the late Eighteenth Dynasty reaches its climax and finale in the reliefs of the Ramose tomb. The gracefully curved lines are more effective in relief than in painting (cf. page 119). What is remarkable is the combination of the immediately tangible, sensuous beauty of the body with the idealized expression of the highest nobility and purest humanity.

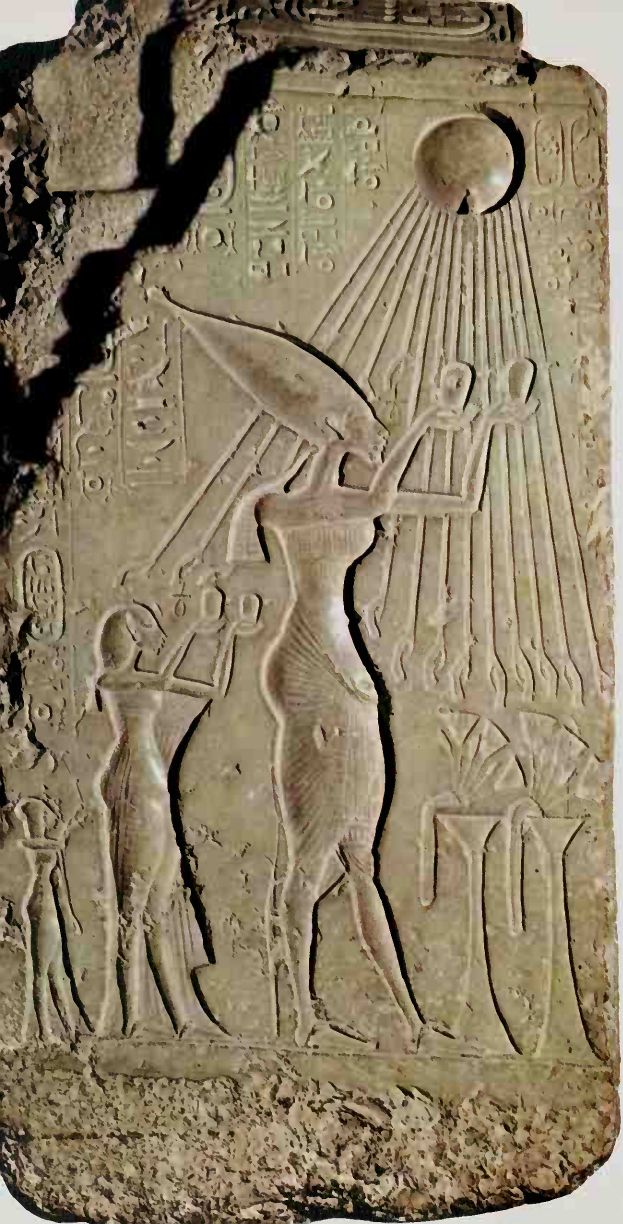


Queen Tiy, the consort of Amenhotep III. Yew wood, precious metals, and inlays of wood and paste, height 3⅞". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1370 B.C. From Gurob. State Museums, Berlin (West)

The head of Queen Tiy, which is probably one of the masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art, stands at the threshold of the Tell el Amarna period, which sets in with highly disturbing royal portraits. (Some authorities put the head at the end of the Tell el Amarna period, or some twenty years later.) There appears to be a movement from the idealizing contemporary portraits toward realism; but in judging ancient Egyptian portraits one may only go as far as to say: "This is what he was," not "This is what he looked like."

Queen Tiy's features disclose details to the spectator that supplement or confirm the picture of this fascinating woman to be found in the historical sources. Tiy, the daughter of parents who were not of royal blood, but who were influential at court, managed to become the actual ruler of the empire, at the side of a royal husband who inclined toward comfort, pleasure, and the most extreme display of luxury and pomp. The qualities that helped her to attain that status may be read in her face—shrewd deliberation, cool matter-of-factness unmarred by any overenthusiasms, resolution, firm self-control, and a contempt for her environment that was the result of bitter experience.

The yew-wood head wore a coif of precious metal, which was subsequently (perhaps when she became a widow) covered with stucco, linen, and beadlike locks of hair. All that remains of her rich adornment are the vestiges of two uraeus snakes above her forehead, a disk of gold and lapis lazuli at her left ear, and a stud on the top of her head, which apparently served as a holder for a feather ornament.



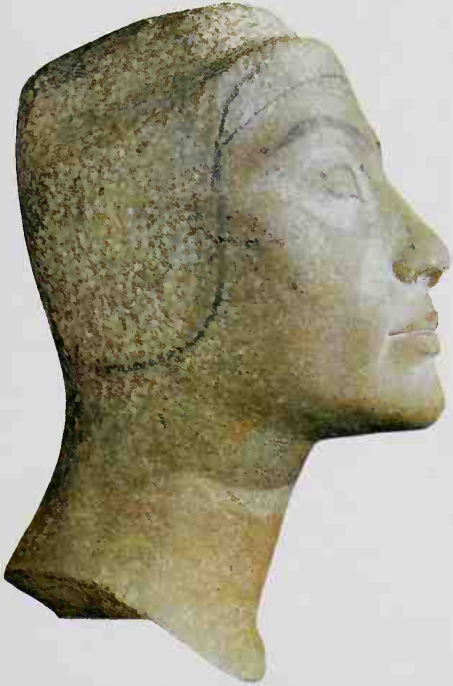
Shortly after the son and successor of King Amenhotep III, the "Heretical King of Tell el Amarna," first known as Amenhotep IV and later as Ekhnaton or Akhenaten (the correct name is probably Akhanjati), mounted the throne, Egypt experienced an internal upheaval of a totally new type, for its causes did not come from below (as in the collapse of the Old Kingdom), nor from outside (as in the invasion of the Hyksos), but rather from above, from the king himself.

The multiplicity of Egyptian gods was reduced to the one sun-god Aten, and Akhenaten proclaimed himself to the people as Aten's son, prophet, and executor. The king abandoned the old capital, Thebes, where Amon-Ra, the king of the gods, had resided in splendor, and founded a new capital at Tell el Amarna, which he named the "Horizon of Aten." The new national god Aten, in whom all the functions of the previous pantheon were now concentrated, was both "Mother" and "Father" as the

King Akhenaten with his family sacrificing to Aten. Limestone, height 41". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1355 B.C. From the Aten temple at Tell el Amarna. Egyptian Museum, Cairo creator-god. As the embodiment of his divine father, the king assumed the latter's hermaphrodite form and had himself depicted in the strangest bodily shapes, which present riddles for research even today and have called forth the most contradictory interpretations. All attempts to interpret this relief as a realistic picture of a king afflicted with a pathological deformity have been rejected. Some see these portrayals as "the expression of the sudden release of spiritual tension" (W. Wolf).

Queen Nofretete has almost the same physical characteristics and facial features as the king. She stands behind her husband, holding, like him, two libation vessels (the dogma states that she is the twin sister of the king, descended from the same divine father). Behind her, a princess swings a sistrum.

The god Aten, the sun-disk, hovers over the king's family. The hands of its rays reach for the offerings, at the same time bestowing vital forces. These are symbolically depicted by the hieroglyph for "life," which is held to the noses of the royal couple to be inhaled.



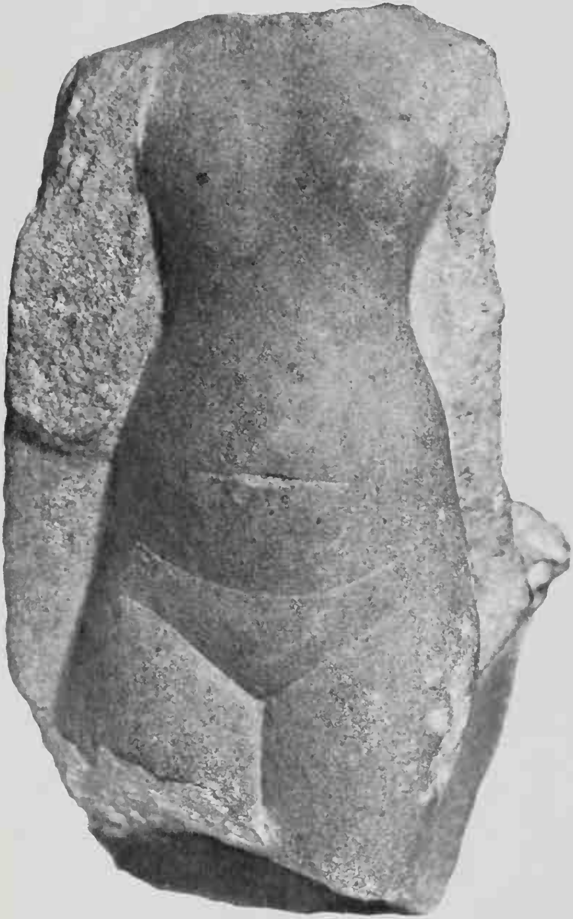
After the first few years of the new, revolutionary style, the sometimes repellent, exaggerated features were modified, and a return to the style of Amenhotep III was striven for. This was not difficult to achieve, for passionate admiration of the beauties of nature was easily reconcilable with the propaganda, the benevolent rule of the creator-god over men, animals, and plants springing, in fact, from the same feeling for life.

While the relief on the facing page portrayed the queen in the same manner as the king in the official early Tell el Amarna style, this quartzite head, like the celebrated bust in Berlin, shows us a queen who fully merits her name "The Beautiful One Has Come."

Queen Nofretete. Quartzite, height 13″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1350 B.C. From Tell el Amarna. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The torso of one of Akhenaten's daughters seems to come from one of the family groups so popular in Tell el Amarna. The girl probably stood on her mother's knees.

Emphasis on the feminine (see page 111) culminates in the designation of the creator-god Aten as "Mother and Father" in the official dogmatic theology of the Tell el Amarna period. In art, this tendency leads to a remarkably high level of achievement in the representation of the female body. Never again was the female form, with its curves and roundnesses, handled as sensitively and delicately as by the artists in Tell el Amarna. In addition to their masterful technique and innate talent, they may also have been assisted in achieving this artistry by the new doctrine propagandized by their king and teacher, with its reverence for the womb as the cradle of future life.

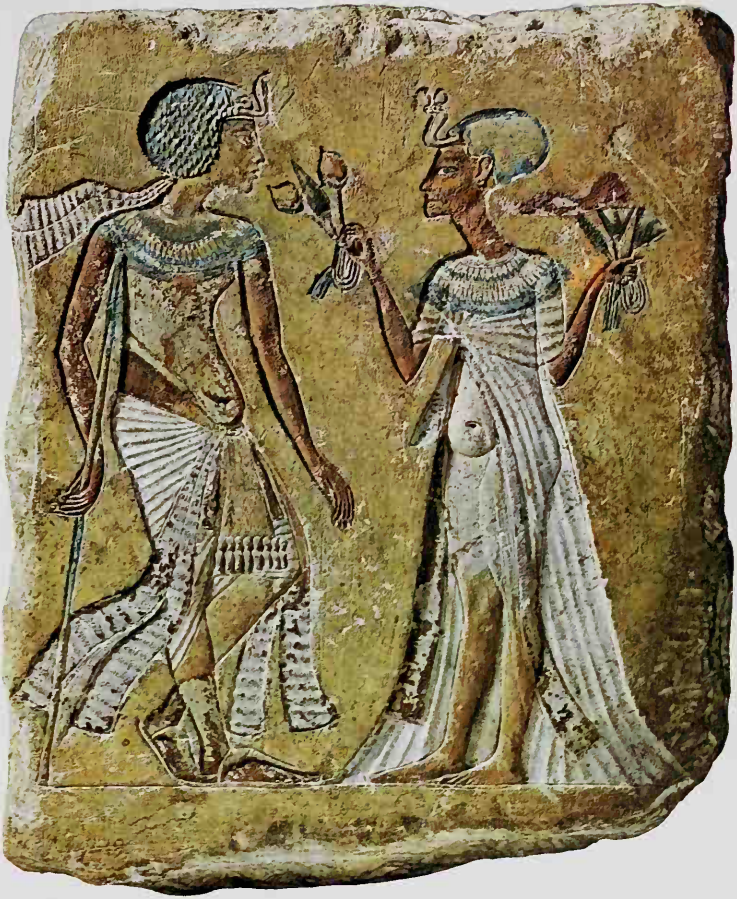


An artist's sketch for a projected work, known as "The Stroll in a Garden," has become famous as an example of the postrevolutionary Tell el Amarna style. Only a trace remains of the distortions and exaggerations of the expressionist period, such as the emphasis on the swelling abdomen, which all but falls over the king's girdle. His chin and the excessively long, thin necks of both figures also recall the former style. Lastly, this motif itself is a favorite subject in the early Tell el Amarna period, for the king liked to have himself portrayed in tender, even intimate, conversation with his wife, and also sometimes with his children.

▶

Torso of a princess. Sandstone, height $5^7/_8$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1350 B.C. From Tell el Amarna. Petrie Collection, University College, London

A king and queen strolling in a garden. Limestone, height $9^1/_2$″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1350–1340 B.C. From Tell el Amarna. State Museums, Berlin (West)

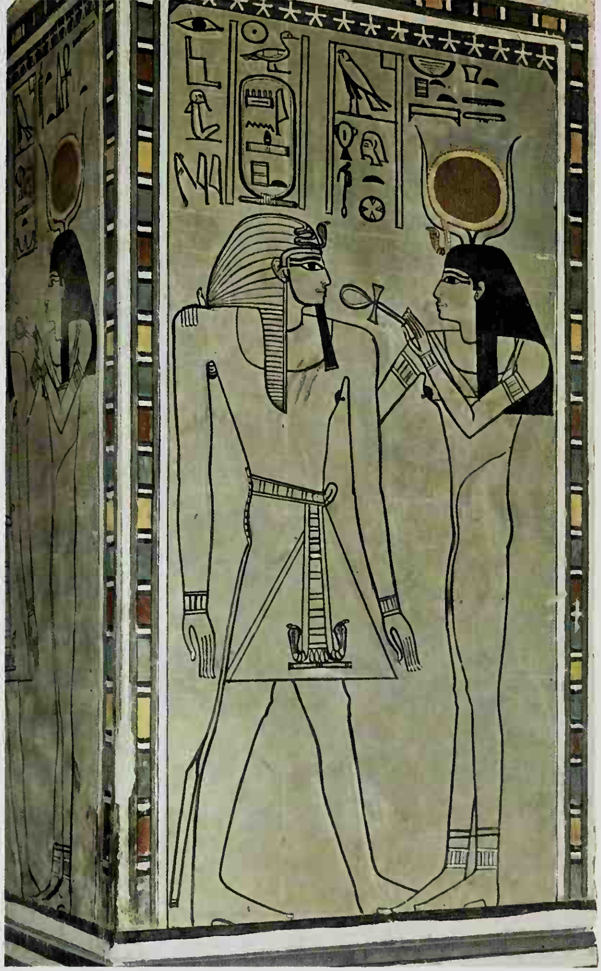


The posture of the king (who may be Akhenaten with Nofretete, or else one of his successors, Semenekhkara or Tutankhamon, with a daughter of Akhenaten) is utterly unkingly, like that of a private individual lackadaisically resting on a staff. The ribbons on his wig and girdle flutter in the wind—another favorite motif of the Tell el Amarna period, portraying the action of the creator-god as revealed in the wind. The queen, facing him, offers her husband fruit (perhaps mandrake as an aphrodisiac) and flowers. Finally, her diaphanous gown completes the mood of this charming and relaxed scene and reveals its real meaning (cf. page 154).

The Western Mountain of Thebes was the place where the sun went down to rest. It was there that the kings of the New Kingdom established their last resting places, to travel through the underworld with the sun during the night of death, looking forward to a new arising and a new life. One area of this range became world-famous as the Valley of the Kings, when the tomb of the young King Tutankhamon was discovered.

The tombs of the kings of the Eighteenth to Twentieth Dynasties who were buried here, with their corridors driven some three to six hundred feet into the solid rock, differ from the older royal tombs, in which the sepulchral chamber and the cult temple were combined into one structural complex (cf. page 43), by separating these two elements. The mortuary temples were situated on the other side of the Western Mountain, at the edge of the strip of fertile land on the western bank of the river at Thebes (for example, Deir el Bahari, page 101). The alignment of the tomb's axis with that of the temple (as in the tomb of Hatshepsut) may be regarded as an endeavor to maintain the relationship between tomb and temple despite the distance separating them.

In spite of all the tremendous security measures employed in the Valley of the Kings, the tombs began to be plundered shortly after the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Hardly a single royal tomb was secure against pillage during the Ramesside period, especially as economic need led even the officials and priests responsible for the security of the graves to participate in this profitable enterprise.

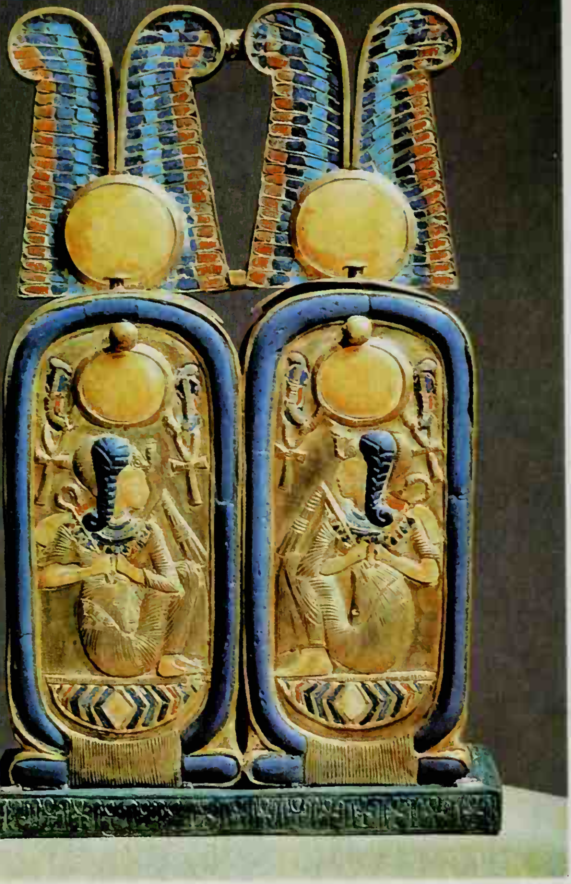


Pillar in the tomb of Amenhotep II in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (No. 35). New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1410 B.C.

The tomb of Amenhotep II is one of more than sixty in the Valley of the Kings. The golden stars of the sky shine under the blue vault of heaven. Hathor, the sky-goddess, wearing horns as a vestige of her previous form as a cow, receives her royal son, who has returned to her in death, in order to give him new life.

The picture is presented only in outline. Preliminary sketches and auxiliary lines provide a glimpse into the workshops of the necropolis artists. The rough arrangement of the figures and inscriptions, sketched on papyrus sheets or ostraka, was transferred to the walls in its final form with sure and confident brush strokes, and finally painted in colors.

Mask of King Tutankhamon's mummy. Gold ▶ with inlays of lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian, feldspar, and glass paste, height 20″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From his tomb in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

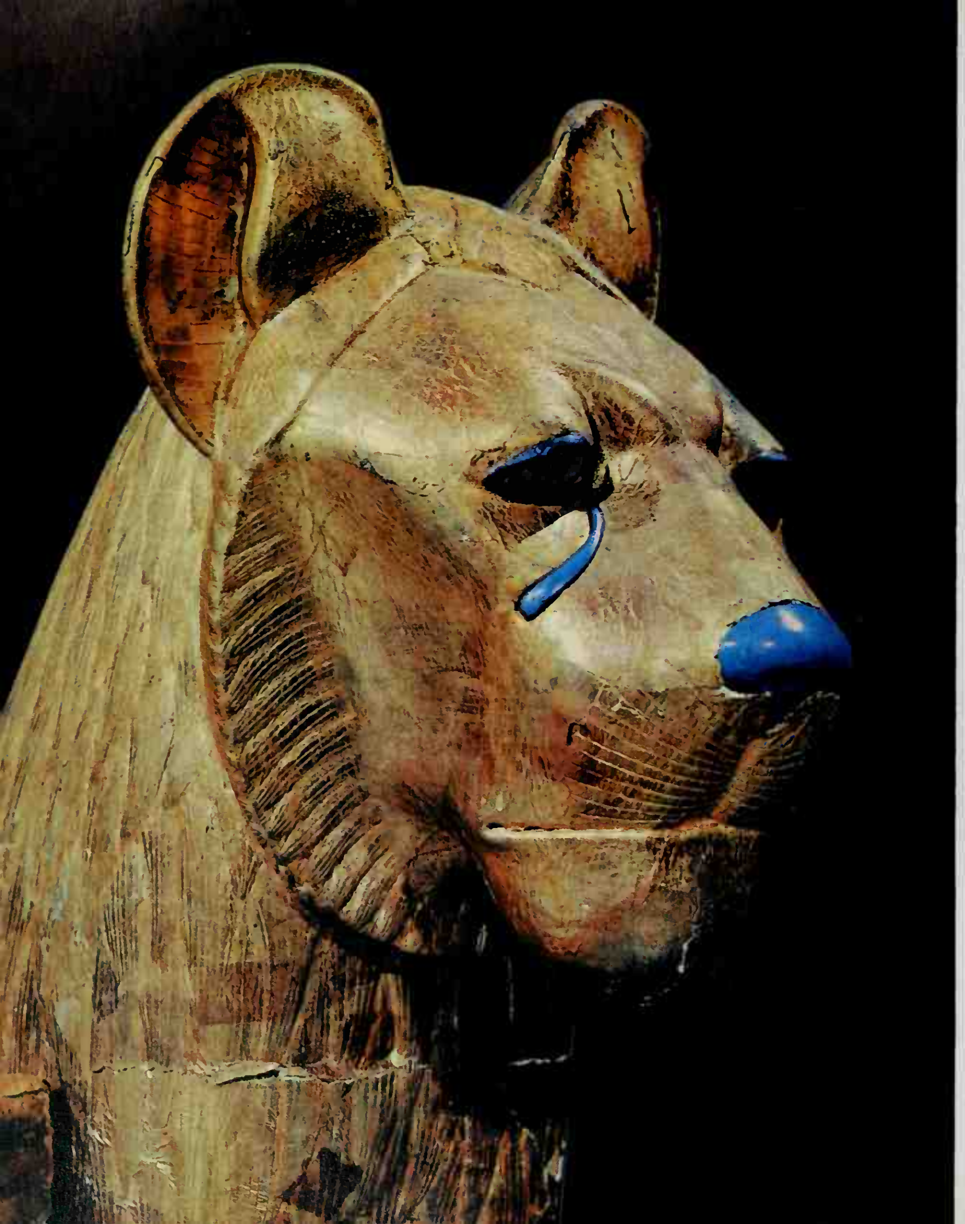


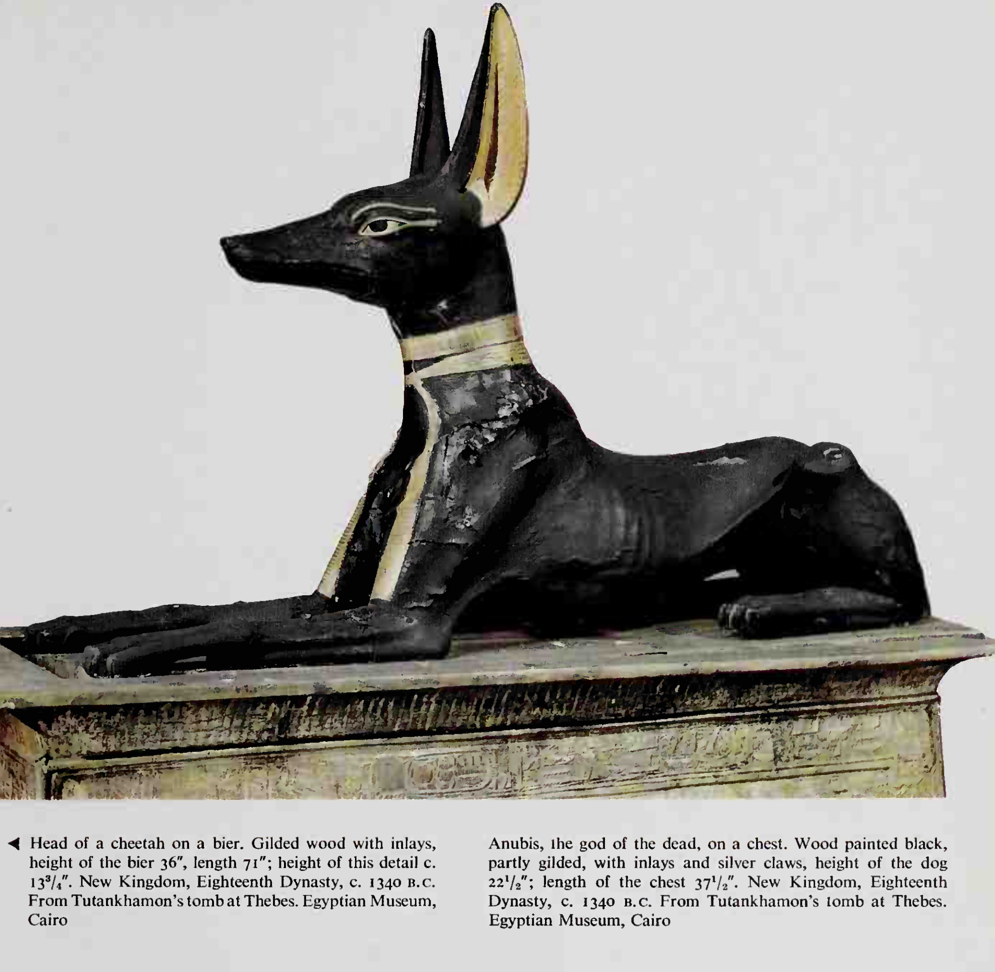
Double jar (for unguents?) in the shape of cartouches bearing the name of King Tutankhamon. Wood covered with gold foil and with glass paste inlays, height $5^{7}/_{8}$″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From the tomb of Tutankhamon at Thebes (No. 62). Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The young King Tutankhamon, whose name was Tutankhaten in Tell el Amarna and who was a son-in-law of the "heretic king" Akhenaten, had the task of carrying out the work of restoration after Akhenaten's plans had miscarried. After his return from Tell el Amarna, he had Amon, the king of the gods, who had been suppressed for a brief period, restored to his place of honor and influence—a deed that was proclaimed by the change in the king's name. Yet it is not his political actions during his lifetime that make him famous today, for as a king he was rather insignificant compared with the great Pharaohs of the New Kingdom. He had the good fortune to have his temporary tomb at Thebes so completely covered by the rubble accumulated during the construction of the tomb of Ramesses VI that he is the only king whose tomb escaped the ravages of grave robbers. (A hasty visit of robbers before the tomb was finally covered over caused more disorder than damage.)

Only in 1922 was his tomb discovered, after five years of methodical exploration. The unimaginably rich offerings in his tomb make painfully clear the treasures that must have been lost in the depredations of the ancient grave robbers, if even such a comparatively small and insignificant royal tomb as this contained such a plethora of the costliest offerings.

The mummy mask, hammered in solid gold, covered the face of the dead man, who rested inside a multiple covering of four wooden chests, one stone sarcophagus, and three gold coffins. The king wears the ceremonial divine beard, and the headdress with the two guardian-goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt: the vulture-goddess Nekhbet and the uraeus snake Buto. A multicolored collar is draped about his neck like a broad garland of sunbeams.





◀ Head of a cheetah on a bier. Gilded wood with inlays, height of the bier 36″, length 71″; height of this detail c. 13¾″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From Tutankhamon's tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Anubis, the god of the dead, on a chest. Wood painted black, partly gilded, with inlays and silver claws, height of the dog 22½″; length of the chest 37½″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From Tutankhamon's tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The dead king was provided with three biers, in the shapes of a cow, a hippopotamus, and a cheetah. They were three variants of the same basic idea, that the dead king was embedded in the body of the sky-goddess, there to attain rebirth.

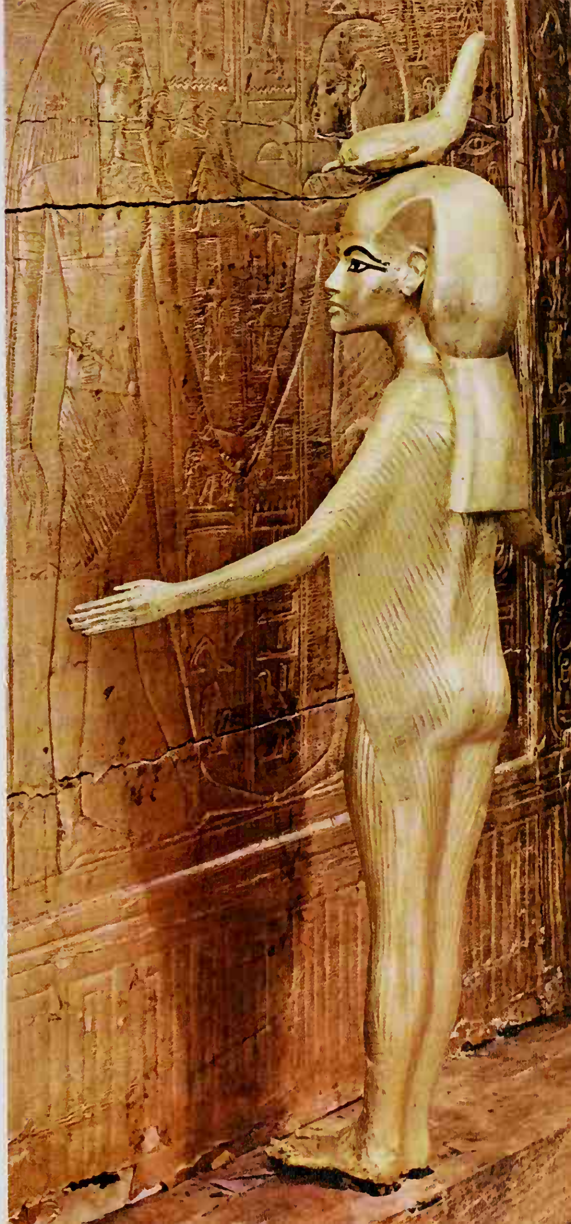
Anubis, god of the necropolis, lay, with the taut attention of a watchdog, on a gilded wooden chest at the passage from the sepulchral chamber to the treasure room. As the indispensable guide and aide of the dead, Anubis took care of embalming, thus laying the basis for the hoped-for resurrection from the mummy.

◀ Pectoral. Gold cloisonné, with chalcedony, lapis lazuli, carnelian, turquoise, and vitreous paste, height c. 4″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From the treasures in the tomb of Tutankhamon. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

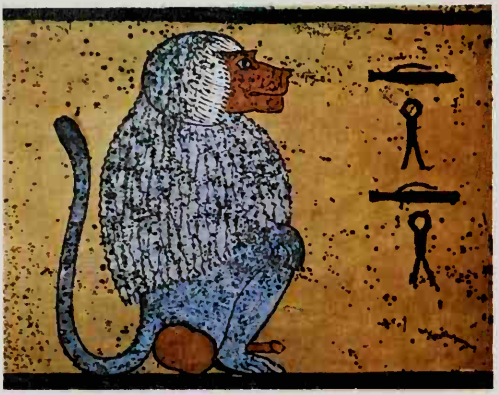
The awakening of the dead to new life is the ever-recurring motif of funerary gifts, and the theme is expressed in this pectoral (facing page) by the perpetual alternation of sun and moon, ascent and descent. In the moon-disk at the top edge, the dead king, who has become the moon-god himself, stands between the hawk-headed sun-god Horus and the ibis-headed moon-god Thoth. The central design of the pectoral is the hybrid form of the sun-god, made up of a bird of prey and a scarab, pushing in front of it a boat containing the eye of heaven. Uraeus snakes wearing sun-disks on their heads form the horizons between which the eternal cycle takes place. Flowers and garlands round off this heavily symbolic representation of continuous renewal.

The scorpion-goddess Selkis guards the canopic jars of the dead king, together with the goddesses Isis, Nephthys, and Neith. One goddess is posted at each of the four sides of the chest, spreading out her arms to increase the protection afforded by the four gods of the canopic jars. One of these viscera gods, Hapi (right), can be seen with the goddess Nephthys on the side of the chest.

The graceful figure of the goddess is further evidence of the consummate skill with which the artists of the late Eighteenth Dynasty portrayed the female body.



The goddess Selkis as guardian of the chest containing the canopic jars. Gilded wood, height of the goddess 36″; height of the chest 78¾″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From the tomb of Tutankhamon at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Detail of the painting on the west wall of the sepulchral chamber in Tutankhamon's tomb at Thebes. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. (see page 150)

Together with the sun-god, the dead king travels through the underworld, and, like the sun-god, returns to life rejuvenated in the morning. This voyage through the night is divided into twelve hours, during the first of which twelve baboons appear as guardian deities. They are depicted in three rows, each containing four panels, and are designated by their names.

A present-day visitor entering the sepulchral chamber of Tutankhamon's tomb looks past the stone sarcophagus at the painted north wall. Tutankhamon's short-reigned successor, Ay, who had been probably the most influential court official in Tell el Amarna, plays the fictitious role of the son and performs the ceremony of "opening the mouth" of his dead predecessor, who, according to dogma, is his father. (In point of fact, Ay could easily have been Tutankhamon's grandfather.) Ay's identity as the reigning king is established by his "blue crown." He wears the panther skin in his capacity as the crown prince performing the functions of a priest, who awakens his dead father (that is, predecessor) to new life. Moreover, the Narmer palette (page 25) supplies evidence that the panther skin is the emblem of the son and heir. Tutankhamon, in the mummy shape of Osiris, the god of the dead, faces Ay, who is opening the mouth and eyes of the mummy with an adzlike instrument, in order to initiate the revival of bodily functions. (This tool has been adopted from the ceremony of giving life to statues.)

Another act of resuscitation—the embrace between Osiris and the king, guided by his *ka* (see page 96)—is depicted at the left edge of the north wall.

In the middle of the wall stands the sky-goddess Nut, who receives her son, the dead Pharaoh returning from the earth, and promises him recovery and life—an analogy to her reception of the sun-god every night. In this encounter the king is carrying a club and a staff, which are not weapons or emblems of rank in this connection, but are symbols alluding to the dead man's undiminished procreative powers. In other words, this union with the sky-goddess is evidently to be understood as being consummated physically, since the hope of rebirth appeared to be realizable only through return to the womb.

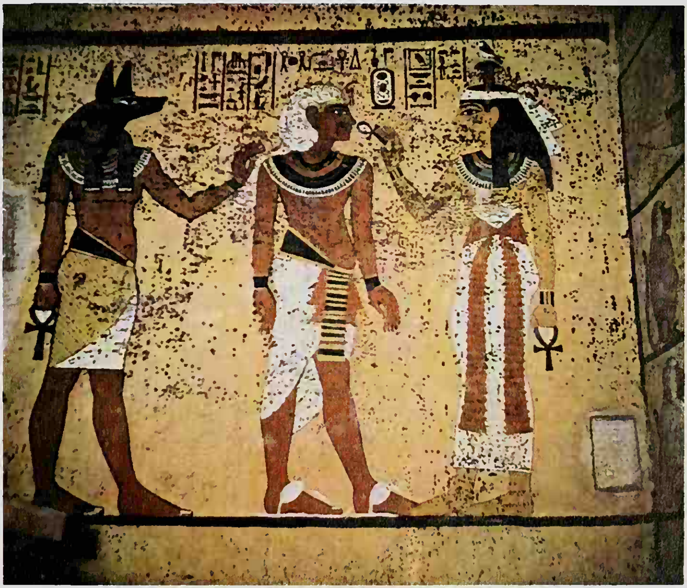
Today the quartzite sarcophagus still contains the outermost of the three mummy coffins that were originally laid one inside the other. Instead of the former cover of the sarcophagus, a pane of glass provides a view of the interred sovereign, whose mummy still rests in his original tomb, though the mummies of his predecessors and successors lie in state today in the Cairo Museum.

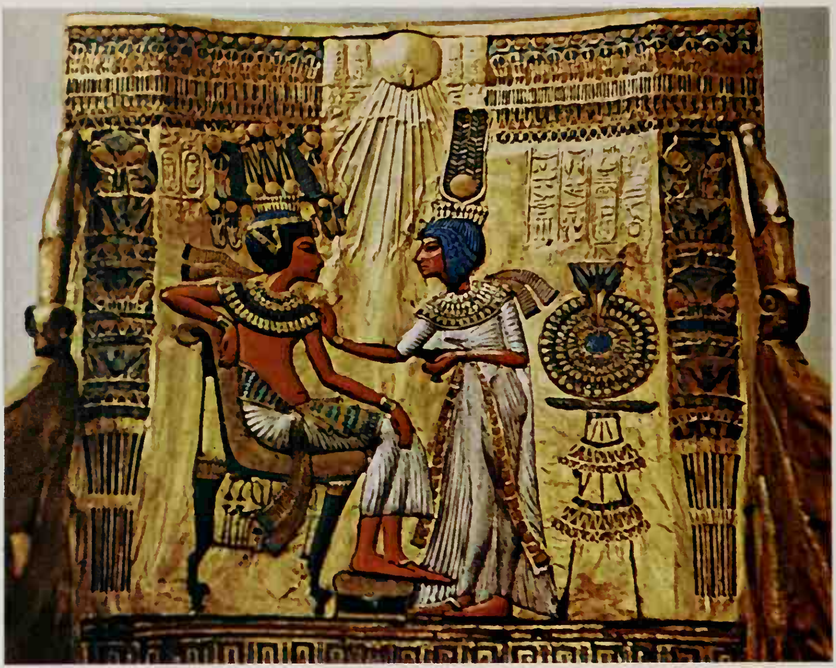
Previous spread: Sepulchral chamber in the tomb of Tutankhamon at Thebes. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C.

The king, endowed with eternal life, stands between Hathor, the goddess of the sky, and Anubis, the god of embalming and the dead (cf. page 147). Hathor has, in addition to her permanent epithet "Mistress of the Sky," the title of "Supreme Ruler of the Western Deserts." She wears on her head the hieroglyph for "West," instead of her cow's horns. Both of these areas, the sky and the West, are feminine words in Egyptian, and the deities that personify them are therefore also feminine. The two regions are interchangeable or linked together in mythology, as both of them denote the maternal region that the sun enters in the evening. Following the example of the sun, the dead kings go to rest in the Western Mountain, "entering heaven" in this way.

This scene also depicts a form of resuscitation, expressed by holding the hieroglyph for "life" up to the nose of the king, who is supposed to inhale the revivifying forces.

South wall of the sepulchral chamber in Tutankhamon's tomb at Thebes. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C.



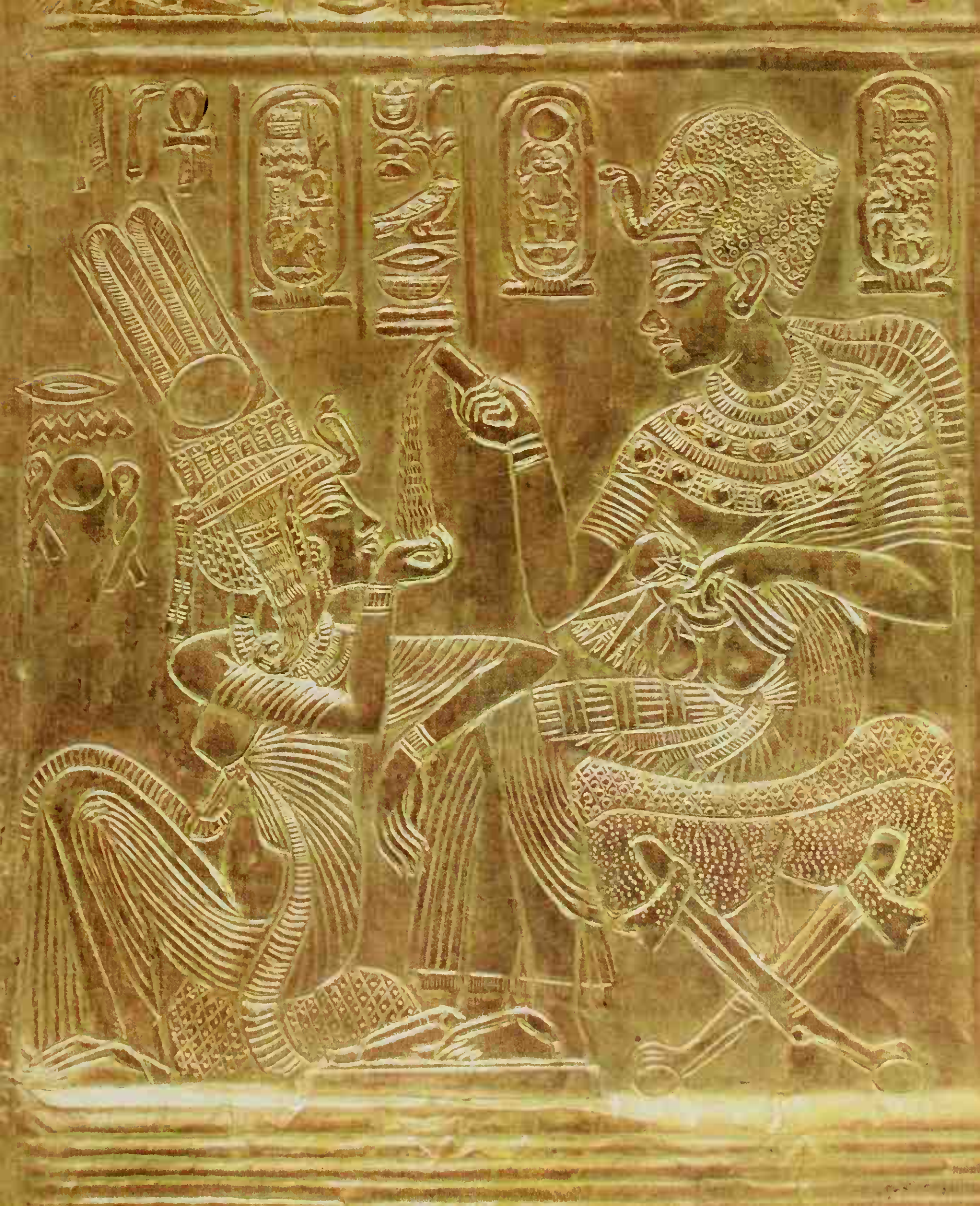


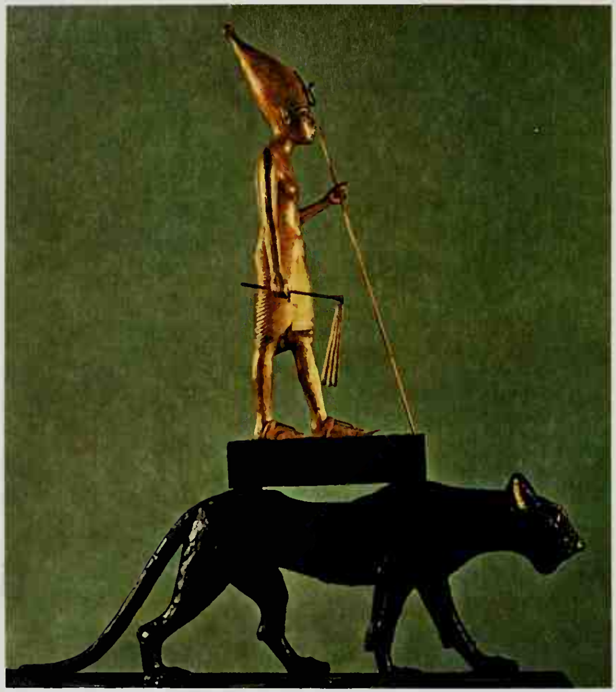
Back of Tutankhamon's throne. Wood covered with gold leaf and with colored inlays of faïence, glass, and stone, width of the back 21″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From his tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Detail of a relief on one of King Tutankhamon's chests. ▶ Wood covered with chased gold, height of the chest 19$^5/_8$″, approximate height of the detail 6″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From his tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

This throne, which still has the name Tutankhaten on the arm rests, while the later name Tutankhamon is engraved on the back, proves that the work of furnishing the king's tomb was begun in the Tell el Amarna period. The motif, the unconventional encounter of king and queen, belongs to the Tell el Amarna period. The picture does not look at all official, despite the heavy crowns and the costly garb. It conveys the impression, rather, of a glimpse into the private life of the royal couple. The graceful Queen Ankhesenamon is handing her husband a bowl, from which she may be anointing his body with fragrant essences.

This tender picture of the young royal couple can only be interpreted as a portrayal of the intimate life of two persons in love. At first sight, it may seem astonishing that such a motif, which is repeated in many variations on this coffin, should be one of the themes of the furnishings for the afterlife. Yet it is explicable in terms of the consistent thought that a hoped-for rebirth was preceded by some sort of reprocreation. Then the meaning of the official trappings becomes clear, for what is involved is the continuation of the dynasty rather than the personal fate of Tutankhamon. For the Egyptians, survival in one's son and heir is also a form of rebirth.





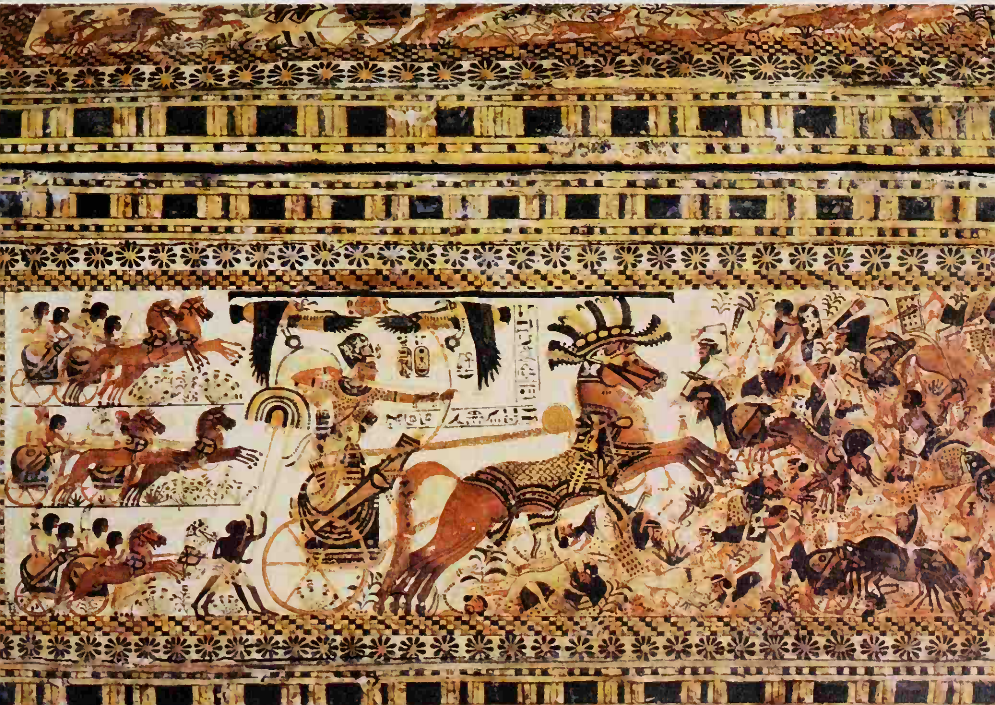
King Tutankhamon, borne by a black panther. Gilded wood, height 35 1/2". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From his tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

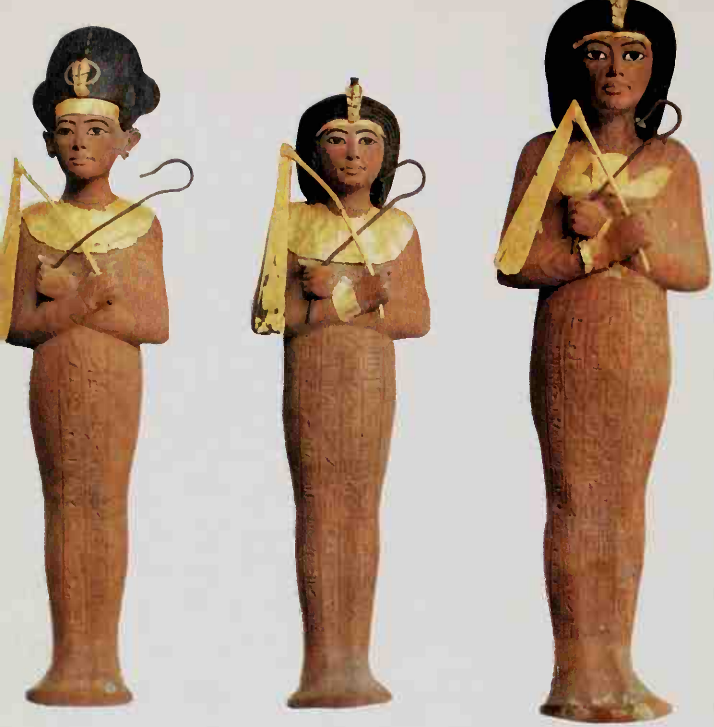
Wooden chest with hunting and battle ▶ scenes. Length 24", height 17 3/8". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From Tutankhamon's tomb at Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Two pairs of identical statues stood together in two chests of black wood. Two of them showed King Tutankhamon wearing the crown of Lower Egypt, standing in a papyrus boat, and performing the ritual spearing of the enemy of the gods, represented by a hippopotamus. The two others depict the king wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, with flail and staff in his hands, and borne on the back of a black panther. The purpose of this duplication, which goes beyond the customary division into Upper and Lower Egypt, is uncertain. We can also only speculate as to the role of the panther. Why is it black, like so many statues of the dead or other funerary gifts? As in the hippopotamus hunt, is this supposed to be Seth, the enemy and murderer of Osiris, who is overcome by the king (as the latter's son and avenger) and transformed into a beast of burden? Or should we see it as the closely related opposite, which depicts the panther not merely as a beast of prey, but also as a kind of deity of the dead, who takes the dead man into its body (cf. pages 45, 147, 183), to let him mature there into a new form of life?

The hunting of lions, hyenas, ibexes, wild asses, and ostriches is shown in two strips on the cover of the chest; the battle against the Nubians is shown on one of the long sides; while the other, reproduced here, records a victorious battle of the king against Asiatic enemies. "Record" is too strong a term, to be sure, for this need not be a portrayal of a historical event at all. Even if we were able to prove that the young king never mounted a war chariot during his reign, we could still not accuse him of falsification or deception of his contemporaries or posterity. These and similar pictures, which show the king's actions in conventional poses, must not ordinarily be regarded as historical facts, but rather as a depiction of the Pharaoh's potential strength. One of his political tasks was to keep the enemies of Egypt and all evil in general (which might also have been symbolized by the animals of the desert) away from his country, and to annihilate them. The ritual, or the ritual representation of this activity, could anticipate the actual event magically, and thus bring about the desired result by acting it out in advance.

The chaotic tumult of the enemy replaces the pack of fleeing and stricken animals shown on page 122. The Pharaoh is always the central figure, protected by the heavenly powers that soar above him. The vault of heaven that terminates the upper edge covers only the Pharaoh and his team of horses. Akhenaten of Tell el Amarna had also made a similar claim: that he was the only son and mediator of the deity.





Some of the numerous ushabti figures from the tomb of Tutankhamon. Wood with gold appliqué. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340 B.C. From Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

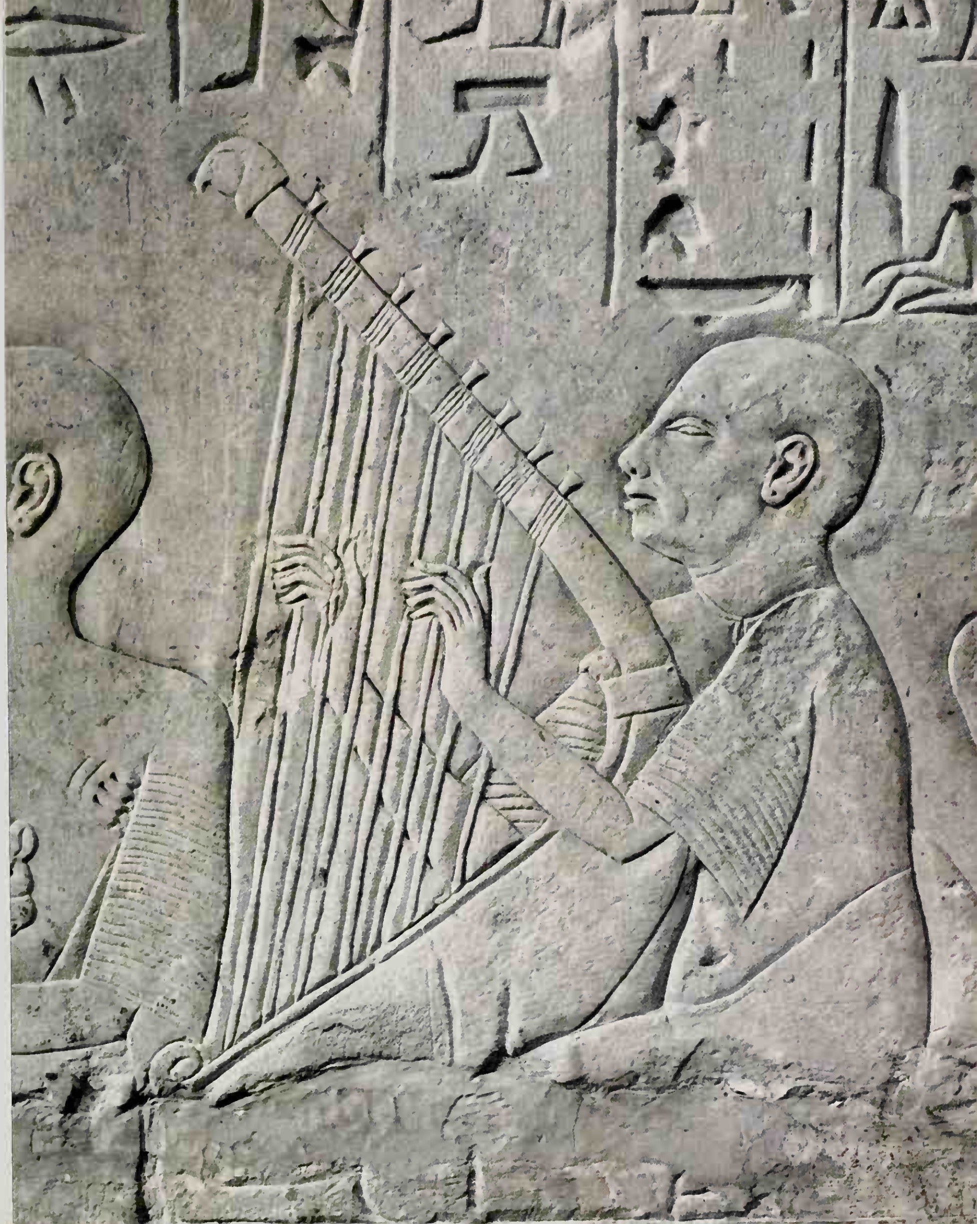
Blind harpist. Limestone, approximate height of the detail $17^3/_4$". New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1340–1330 B.C. From the tomb of Patenemhab at Saqqara. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden ▶

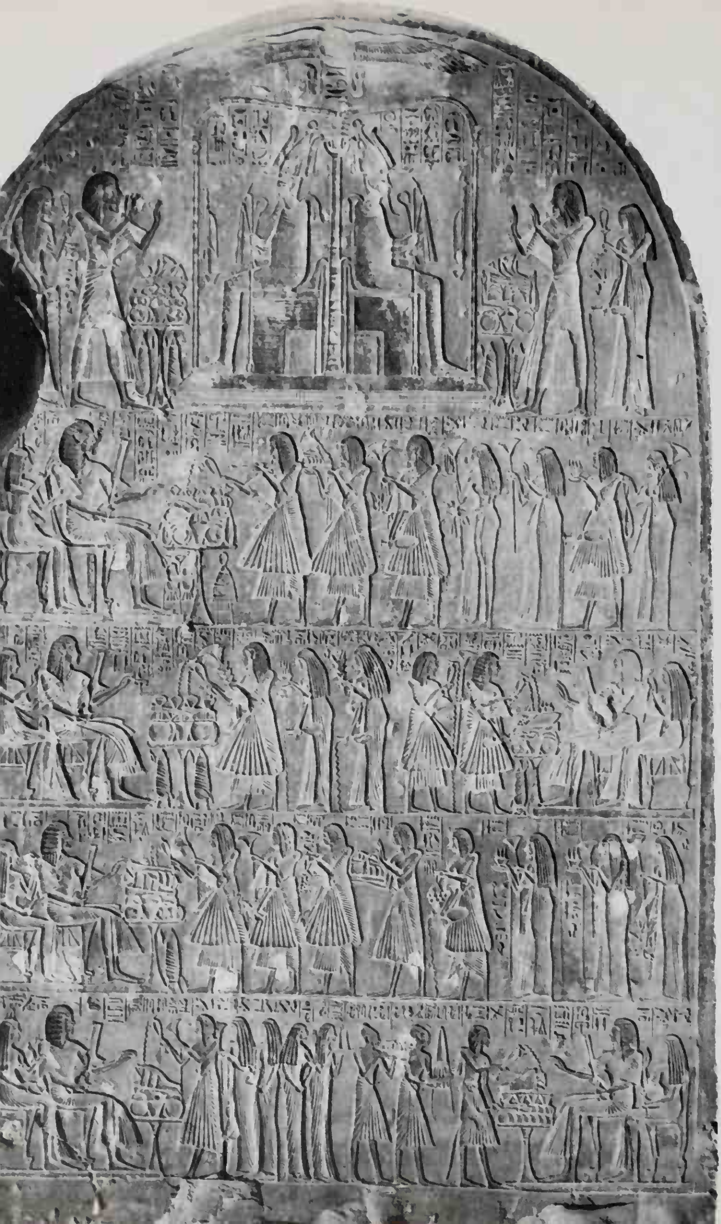
More than four hundred such ushabti figures, some of them as much as two feet high, were found in Tutankhamon's tomb, although a total of 365 would have sufficed to free the dead king from any daily labor that might have to be done in the course of a year in the hereafter.

The features of these figures were those of the dead king, for they were to serve as substitutes, responding "Here am I" whenever the name of the dead man was called out to do work in the hereafter. This function as "answerers" later gave them their name, which can, in fact, be read as "answerer." Whereas the ushabti figures of commoners carried tools in their hands, the king's figures held the insignia of royal power and functioned accordingly as overseers. However, the tools (1,866 in all) lay ready for use beside the ushabti figures.

"Place myrrh upon your head," sings the harpist (facing page), by which he means the unguent cones worn in the Theban festivals of the dead (see page 119). Accompanied by a flutist (only partly visible) he sings for his lord the "Harpist's Song" so beloved at these feasts. ▶

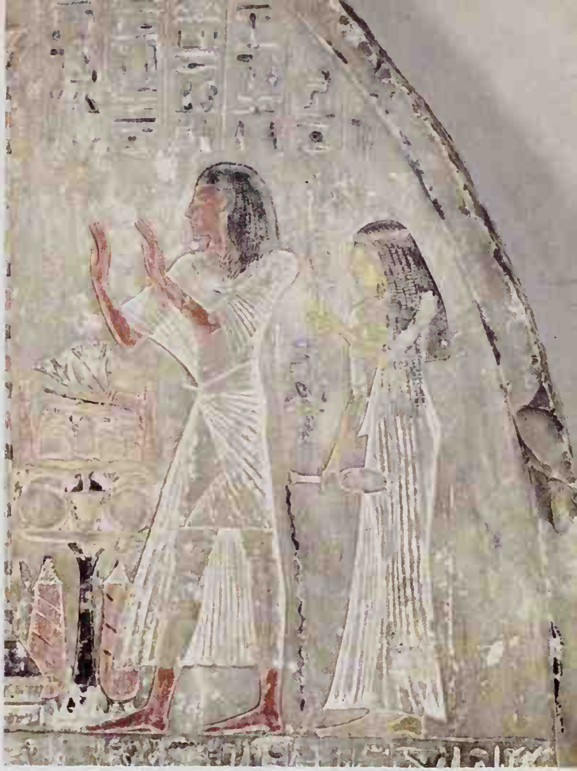
The harpist has opened his lips to sing, and the fingers of both hands pluck the strings of the instrument. The depiction of hands and arms is almost three-dimensional, seen, as they are, both in front of and behind the harp.





Stele of Huy. Limestone, height 58″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1360 B.C. Probably from Memphis. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

The dead man and his wife are sacrificing to Osiris. The inscription reads: "Praise to Wenennofre [Osiris], the Good God, the Ruler of the Living; may he grant transfiguration in heaven, power on earth, vindication before the Lord of Eternity [i.e., pass the examination before the court of the dead], for the *ka* (see page 96) of Huy, [who has become] Osiris, the scribe of the treasury of the "Good God" [the king], vindicated before the Great God [Osiris]."



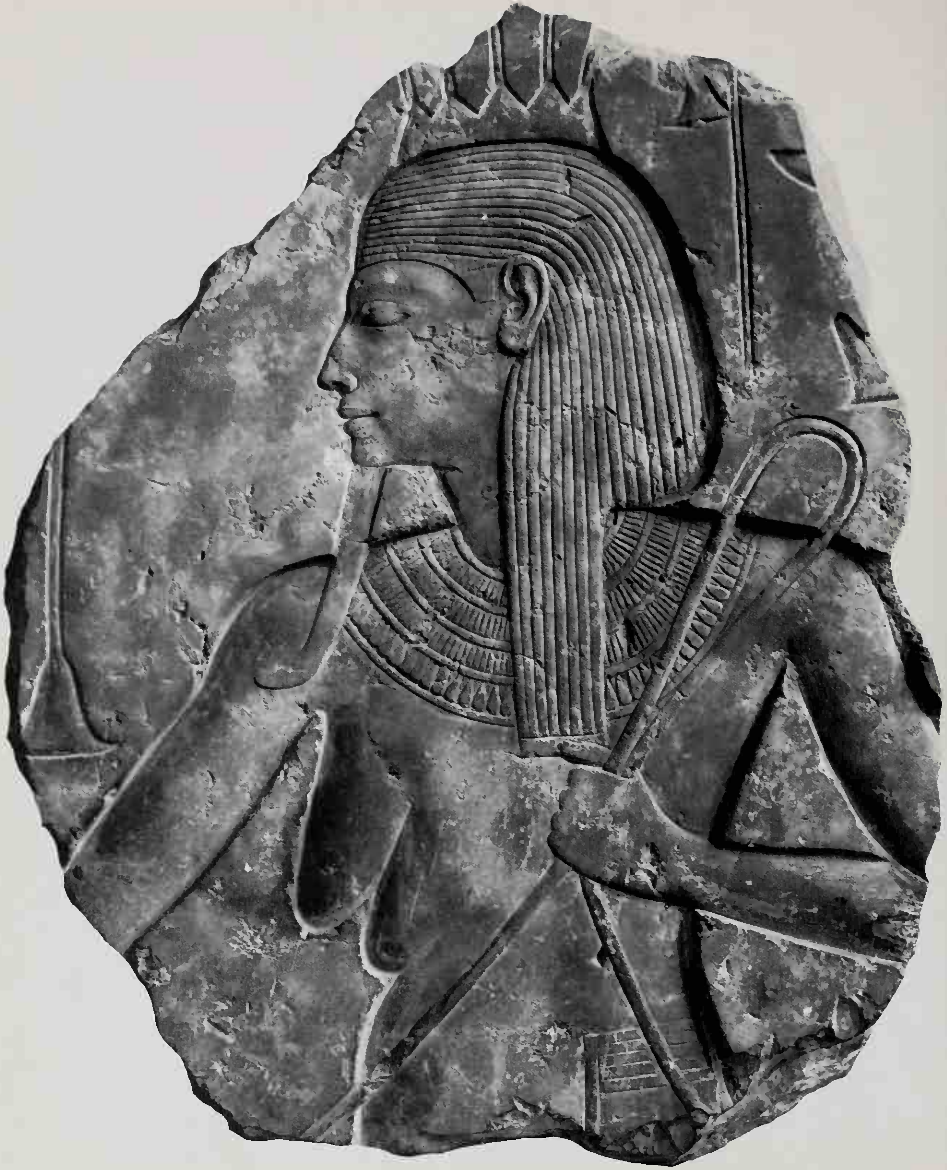
Detail of the stele of Huy (facing page). Approximate height of the detail $15^3/_4$″

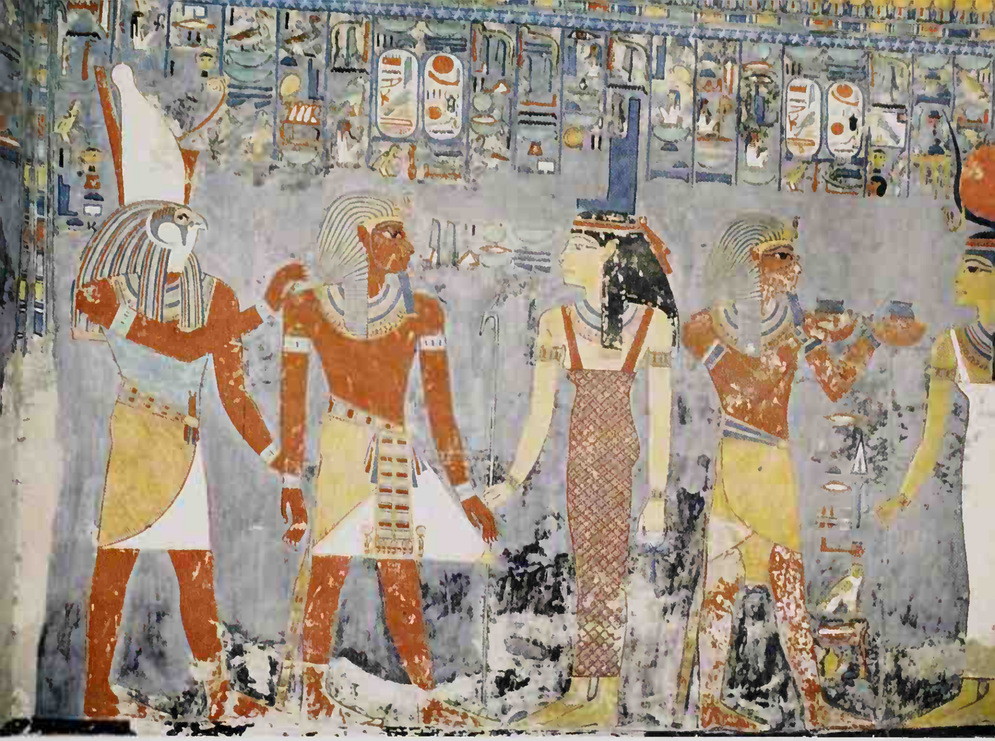
The appearance of Huy, the royal scribe of the treasury, before Osiris, the god of the dead, is depicted in the top register beneath the rounded vault of heaven and the winged sun-disk. The dead man has an offering table heaped with gifts; he raises both his arms and recites a hymn to the ruler of the dead (see the detail, right) accompanied by his wife, who swings a sistrum and pours out a libation of water.

The mummified Osiris, seated on his throne, is depicted twice: at the right, as the ruler of the necropolis district of Memphis; at the left, as the ruler of the dead in Abydos, Upper Egypt. This dual aspect of the god of the dead, together with the janiform arrangement beneath the sun-disk, looking eastward and westward at the same time, must be viewed as a successful attempt to express the continuous alternation of end and new beginning, of death and rebirth. It is with Osiris, who himself dies and is resurrected, that every life cycle comes to an end and has its new beginning. Thus, the man who comes to Osiris in death, and becomes Osiris himself, has attained the certainty of resurrection from, or through, this god.

Instead of a mirrorlike arrangement, which would depict the deceased, like Osiris, a second time, the left panel shows the dead man's parents facing the god. This, too, must probably be regarded from the standpoint of eternal life, for the simultaneous representation of parents and children is often intended to record, graphically and thus for all time, the endless chain of life from one generation to the next.

The other registers show scenes that recall the festivities in commemoration of the dead found in the Theban tombs. The members of the family are seated in pairs in front of their offering tables and receive gifts of incense, water, and flowers from other relatives, principally their sons and daughters, though also from priests and servants. A ritual-ceremonial gravity colors all their actions, which differentiates them from the festivities for the dead in the Theban tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty with their almost frolicsome air.



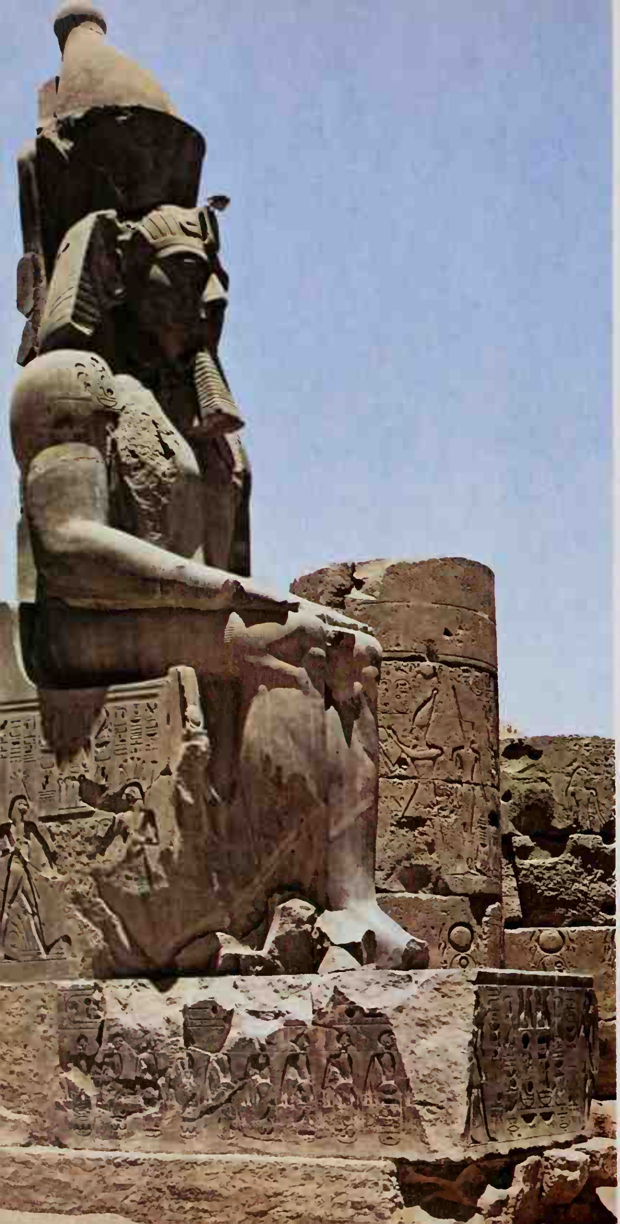


◀ Nile-god in the form of a fertility-god, fragment of the side of a throne of a colossal seated statue. Crystalline limestone, height 17¾″. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1335 B.C. From Medinet Habu at Thebes. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

King Horemheb in the hereafter. Painting in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (No. 57). New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1335–1305 B.C.

Horemheb, the last king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, was not of the divine dynastic blood (he had been a general like Ay), but his personal qualities and his military might procured him the right of appearing before the gods of Egypt in the afterlife as their true son. At the right, he is offering a libation of wine to Hathor, the ruler of the sky. The other scene shows him being introduced to the goddess Isis by her son Horus, whose earthly embodiment he was. Isis greets the king with these words: "Welcome, my beloved son; I shall give you the throne of Osiris."

◀ Though this piece is but a fragment, the theme of the union of the two lands, usually found on the sides of thrones, is easily discernible (cf. page 88). The style is that of the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and experts consider the features to be those of King Ay, Tutankhamon's successor (see page 151).



The visitor to the temple at Luxor, looking through the entrance from without, can see the statue situated at the end of the colonnaded passageway (facing page). After passing through the first court, laid out by Ramesses II, he stands in front of the seated figure of the building's owner, some twenty-three feet high. Ramesses II is seated on his throne in the archaic posture of the old kings (cf. page 30). The "Unification of the Two Lands" (see page 88) is shown on the sides of the throne, and enemies lie in fetters under his feet.

Like that of many of his contemporaries, the figure of the king is powerful and ponderous, but it no longer has the consummate artistry of the preceding dynasty.

Seated statue of King Ramesses II in the temple at Luxor, Thebes. Height c. 23′. New Kingdom. Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1290–1225 B.C.

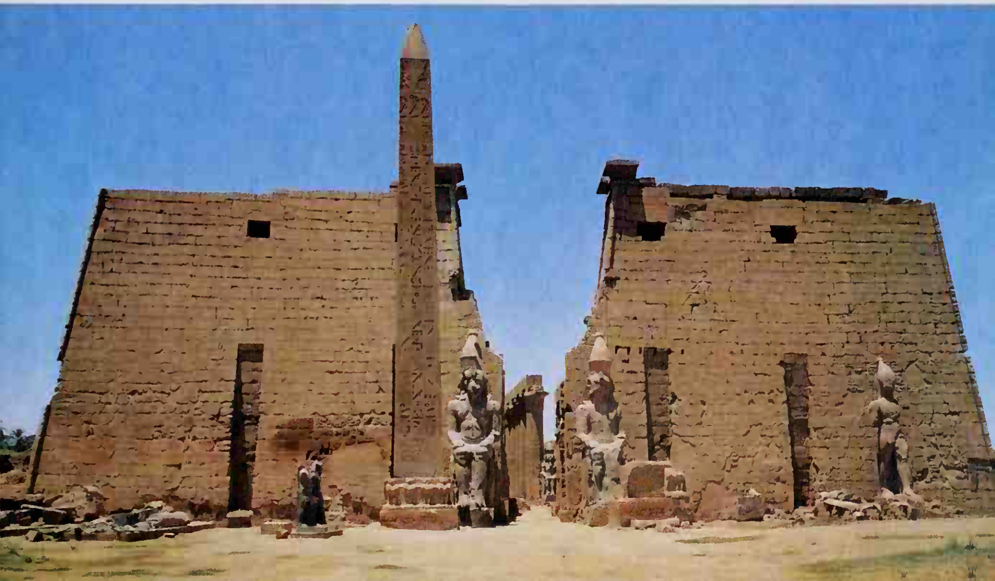
Ramesside period, Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (c. 1305–1070 B.C.)

Egypt recovered fairly quickly from the convulsions caused by the Tell el Amarna period and its sequels. Law and order were restored under Horemheb (see page 163), and the foundations were laid for renewed activity in foreign policy.

Once again, power and, with it, kingly status is transferred to an influential officer: a new and henceforth hereditary dynasty begins with Ramesses I. As early as the third generation, after Sety I, the Nineteenth Dynasty produced another great ruler, who was able to bring splendor to Egypt once more, without, however, even approaching the level of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

There is hardly a site in Egypt where we do not encounter the name of Ramesses II. Whatever was not actually newly constructed by this most industrious of Egypt's builders was renovated and labeled with his name. He had a new colonnaded court built in front of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple at Luxor (see pages 102–3), and completed the temple complex with a pylon 213 feet wide. He had his precarious victory over the Hittites at Kadesh (1285 B.C.) recorded on the walls of the pylon. This scene combined the historical record with an expression of the timeless, omnipresent action of the king, here in the sense of effective protection of the temple against the powers of the external world. The colossal figures of the king in front of the pylon's façade also seem to function as guardians. At one time, a pair of slender flagpoles stood in each of the niches. One of the obelisks, which were usually erected in pairs, now stands in the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

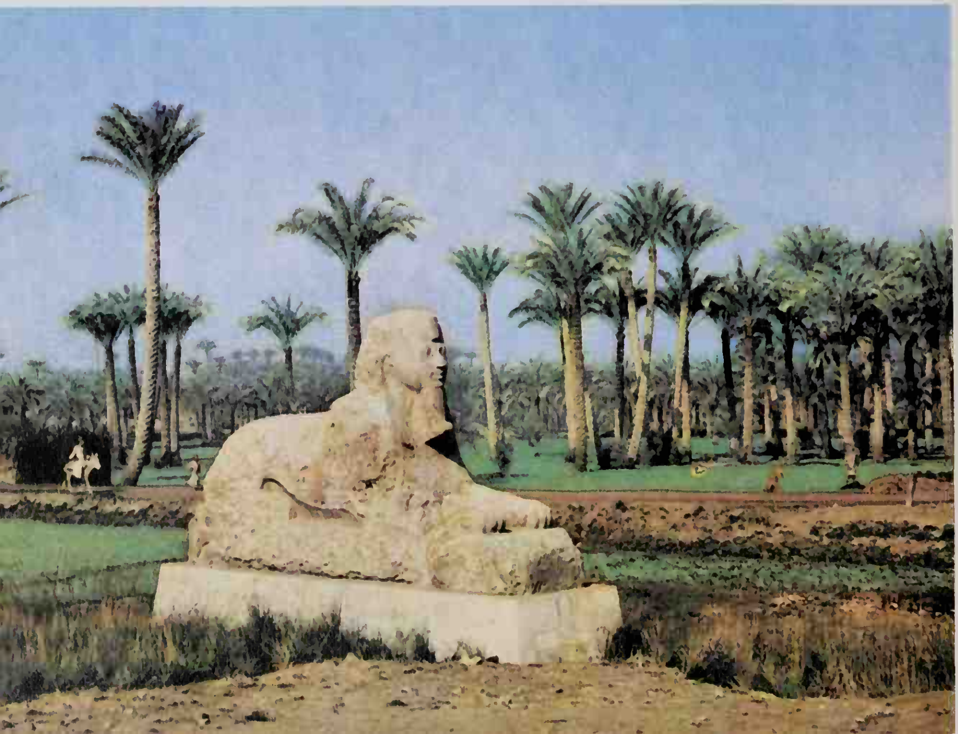
Pylon of the temple at Luxor, Thebes. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1290–1225 B.C.



This sphinx, which probably depicts Sety I as a hybrid man-lion (cf. pages 45, 94), can not be dated from inscriptions, but solely from its stylistic characteristics. Some authorities set its date as the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Indeed, as far back as the Eighteenth Dynasty, Memphis, the capital of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, had regained status alongside the new capital, Thebes. As the point of departure for campaigns against Asia, the "Balance of the Two Lands" (as this meeting point of Upper and Lower Egypt was called), was the seat of the princes appointed to command the troops and the garrison town of the Egyptian army. It was in Memphis that Tuthmosis III organized his Asian campaigns. After the collapse of the Tell el Amarna movement, the court did not return to Thebes, but went to Memphis, which again became the capital of Egypt for a time, until the Ramessides transferred their royal residence to the area of Tanis in the eastern Delta. Thereafter, Thebes was merely a religious center: Amon, the king of the gods, had to share the title with Ptah of Memphis and Ra of Heliopolis. Down to the end of the Ramesside period, however, it was at Thebes that the dead Pharaohs found their last resting place in the Valley of the Kings.

Sphinx at Memphis. Alabaster, height 14′, length 24′ 3″.
New Kingdom, probably Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1300 B.C.

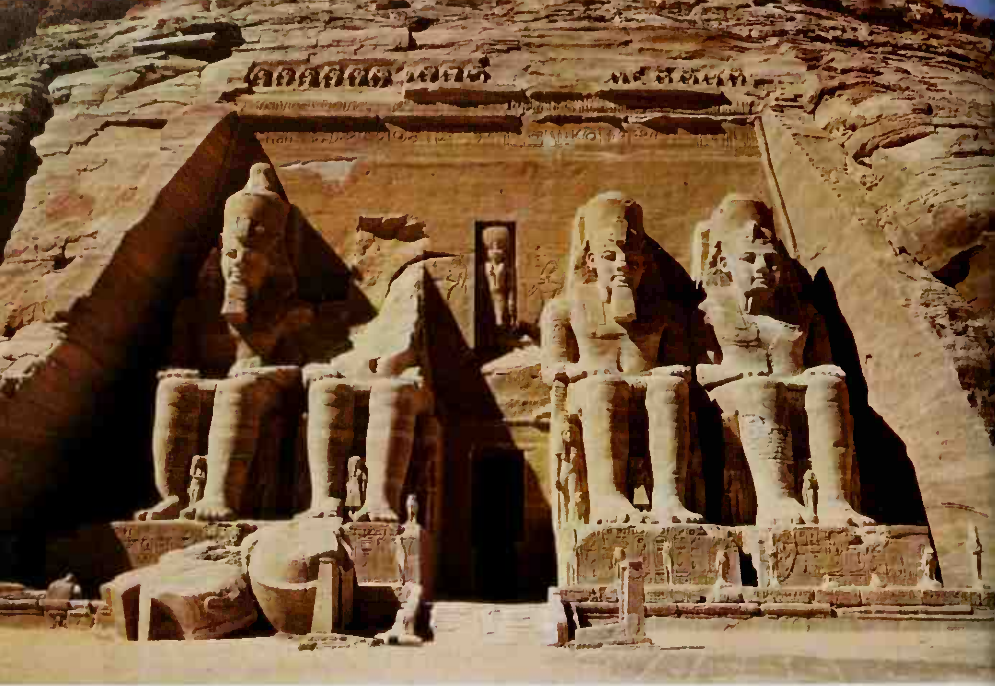
Ruins of the temple ▶
of Ptah at Memphis



It is probable that the alabaster sphinx (facing page) originally stood as the entrance to the temple of Ptah at Memphis. Today its ruins hardly convey the fact that it was once the religious center of an important and extensive city. The private houses, built of air-dried loam bricks, have been reconverted into Nile silt by the ground water of the fertile land. On the other hand, the stones of the temples, built to last forever, were carried away as valuable building material in the construction of medieval Cairo.

According to ancient lore, Ptah, the local god of Memphis, created gods and men, animals and plants, heaven and earth, in short, everything in the world; and this he accomplished, interestingly enough, not by physical procreation or artistic skill, but by an act of spiritual creation: his heart thought up the creatures, and his tongue spoke their names, and thus they were created as the word become flesh. As the creator-god, Ptah became the patron of artisans and artists, so that the Greeks equated him with their Hephaestus. As the god of the seat of government and "King of Egypt," he can wear the royal insignia (see page 179). His consort is the lion-shaped Sekhmet (see page 109).

The temple of Ptah at Memphis was called Hikuptah ("House of the *Ka* of Ptah"), and it is probably from this name that the Greek form "Aigyptos" derived, which, in turn, is the origin of the English name bestowed on the land of the Pharaohs.

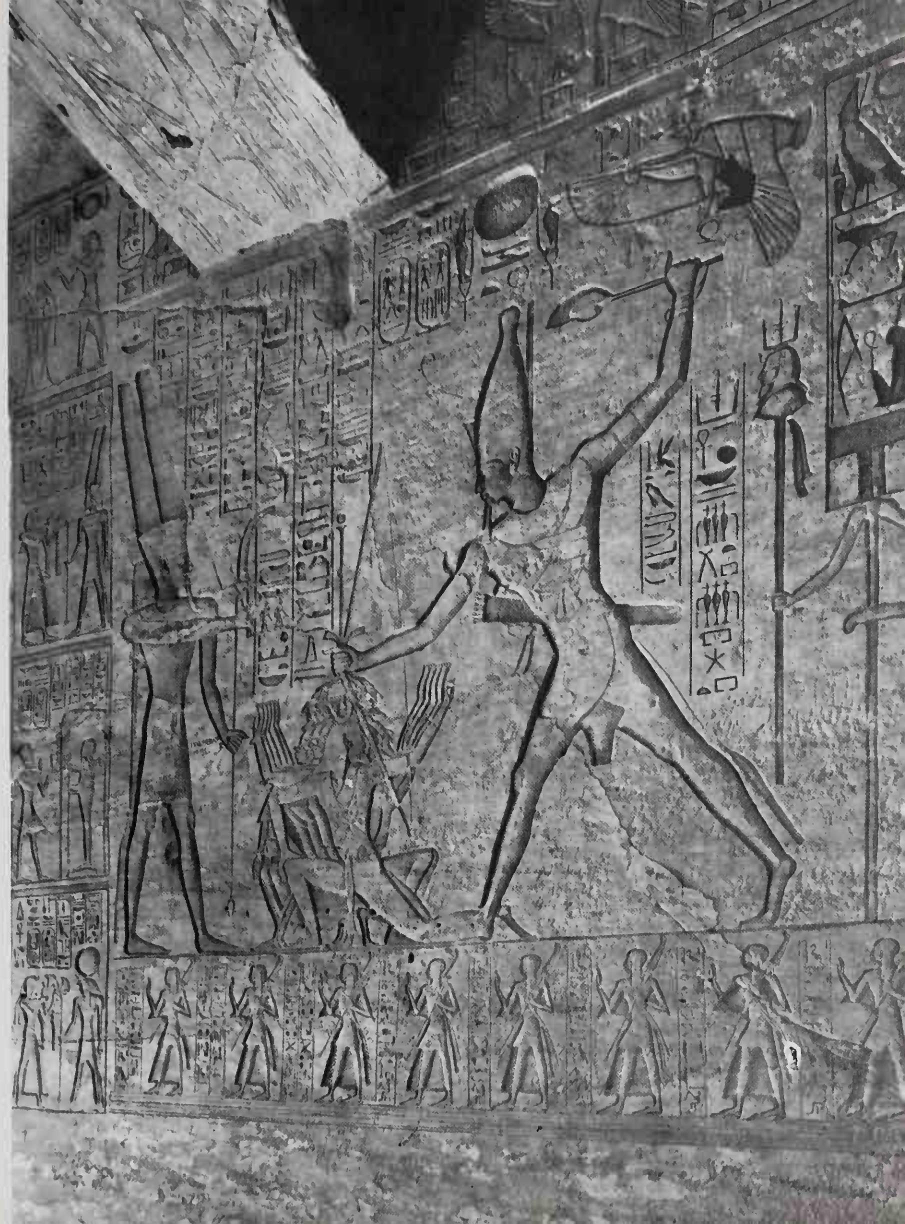


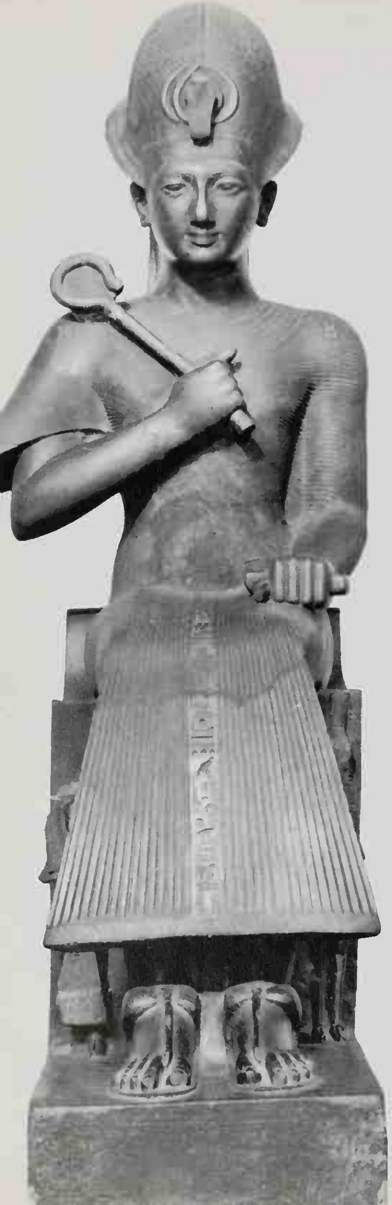
Entrance façade of the rock temple of Abu Simbel, Nubia. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1290–1225 B.C.

Deep inside Nubia, Ramesses II had a complete temple cut into the interior of the steep cliff along the river's shore. The sloping, smoothed wall of rock constituted the outer wall of the pylon, in front of which colossal statues of the king himself, hewn out of the solid rock, stood guard as at Luxor (see page 165). The visitor, coming from the shore of the Nile, obtained some idea of the boldness of the plan when, passing by the massive seated figures of the king, he entered the halls of the temple nearly two hundred feet deep in the mountain and stood finally in the sanctuary. This admiration would turn to reverent devotion if he had the good fortune to witness the sunrise during an equinox within the ritual chamber. The rays of the rising sun, illuminating the central axis of the temple precisely oriented toward the east, fell upon the cult statues of the gods worshiped there, as they stood in the furthermost chamber: Amon-Ra of Thebes, Ra-Horakhte of Heliopolis, Ptah of Memphis, and the deified king, here in a foreign land.

By damming the river, modern technology has threatened this temple built for eternity, as well as many other Nubian sites, with drowning. Fortunately, however, the means have also been found for rebuilding it on higher ground.

Relief in the Hall of Columns in the temple of Abu Simbel. Ramesses II has seized the subjected enemies of Egypt (Nubians, Asians, ▶ Libyans) by their hair and slays them ritually. Amon-Ra presents the king with the sickle-shaped sword that symbolizes strength. Behind the king, as his personal guardian power, stands the royal *ka* standard (cf. page 96)





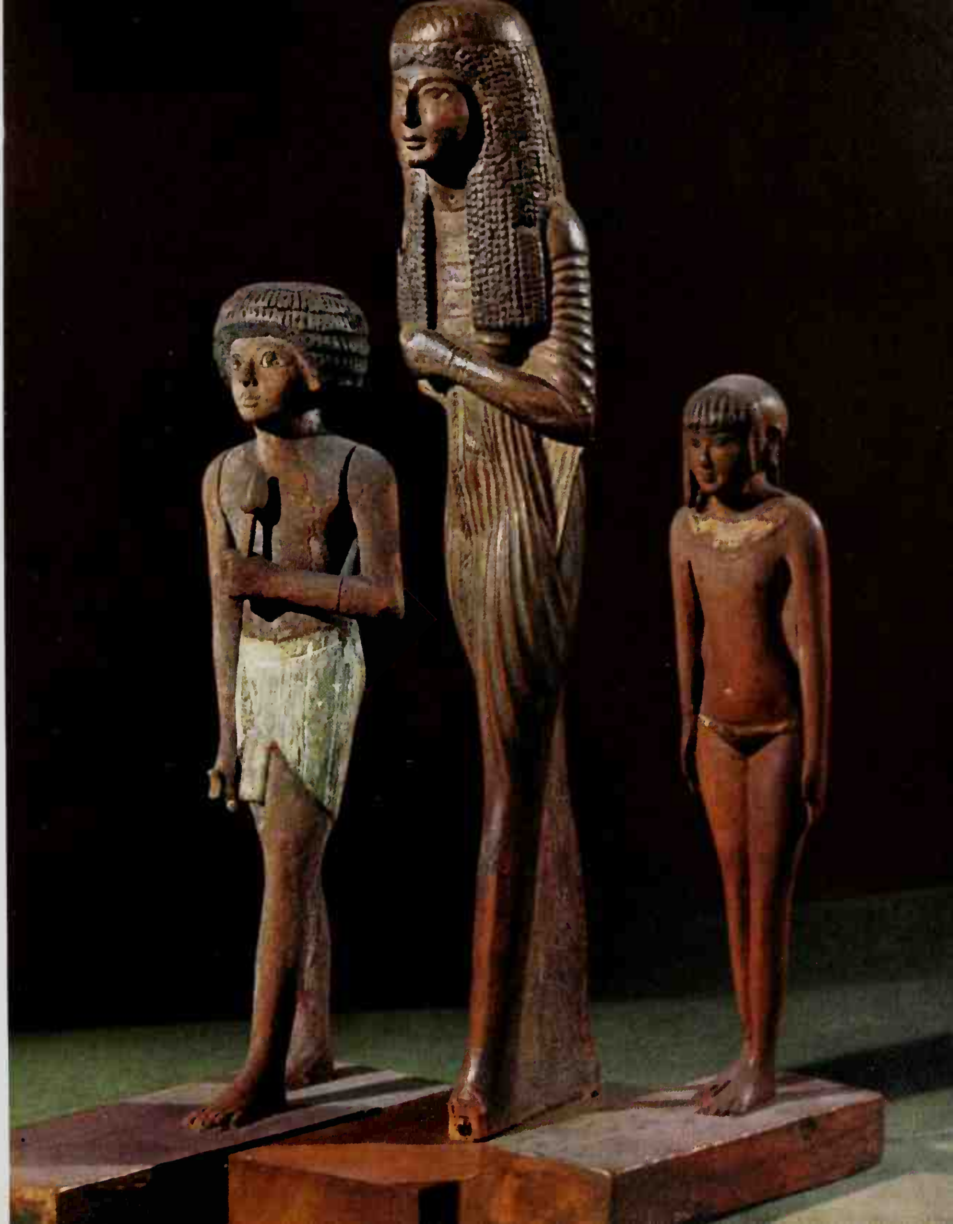
The renewed advance of the kingdom after the convulsions of Tell el Amarna is visibly expressed in the celebrated seated figure of Ramesses II in Turin. Old and new elements are combined into a contemporary and yet timeless image of a king. As in the past, the king is seated in the conventional attitude on his throne, though the position of the arms formerly dictated by the afterlife (cf. page 32) has now been completely transformed into a demonstration of the king's temporal power. Both hands are clenched into fists holding the insignia of royal power and dignity. The king's garb displays the fashions of the New Kingdom: a long, finely pleated gown covers the upper half of his body and his upper arms. The "blue crown," which is interpreted as a sort of war helmet, recalls the age of the army commanders Ay, Horemheb, and Ramesses I, and the warlike Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty in general. The "nine arches" beneath the king's feet represent the hostile neighbors ruled by the Pharaoh and are an ancient symbol of military superiority. The king's countenance is a remarkable contrast to these military details: the soft, almost friendly, features remind us that this king was a man of peace who enjoyed a long reign, rather than a successful commander in the field.

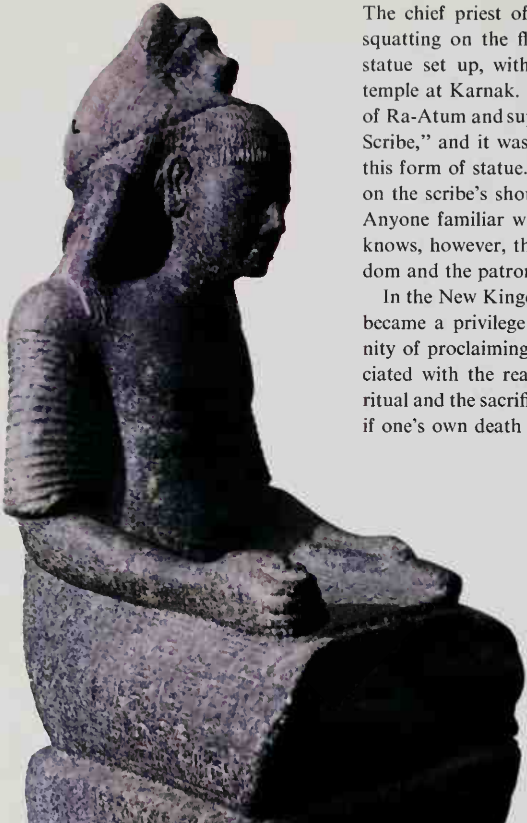
Another masterpiece in the Turin Museum is the wooden ▶ statuette of an unknown elegant lady, which captures the charm and magic of feminine attractiveness almost as successfully as in the time of Amenhotep III. She wears the fashionable long wig and a close-fitting, pleated gown reaching down to her feet, which emphasizes, rather than conceals, her excessively slim figure.

The two figures of children (which come from a different, and older, tomb) are set up alongside the lady as companions. Their carefree children's faces make them look lively and natural in spite of their otherwise stiff posture.

King Ramesses II. Granite, height $76^{1}/_{2}$". New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1290–1225 B.C. From Karnak. Egyptian Museum, Turin

Statuette of a lady. Wood, height $15^{3}/_{8}$". New Kingdom, Nineteenth ▶ Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C. Egyptian Museum, Turin





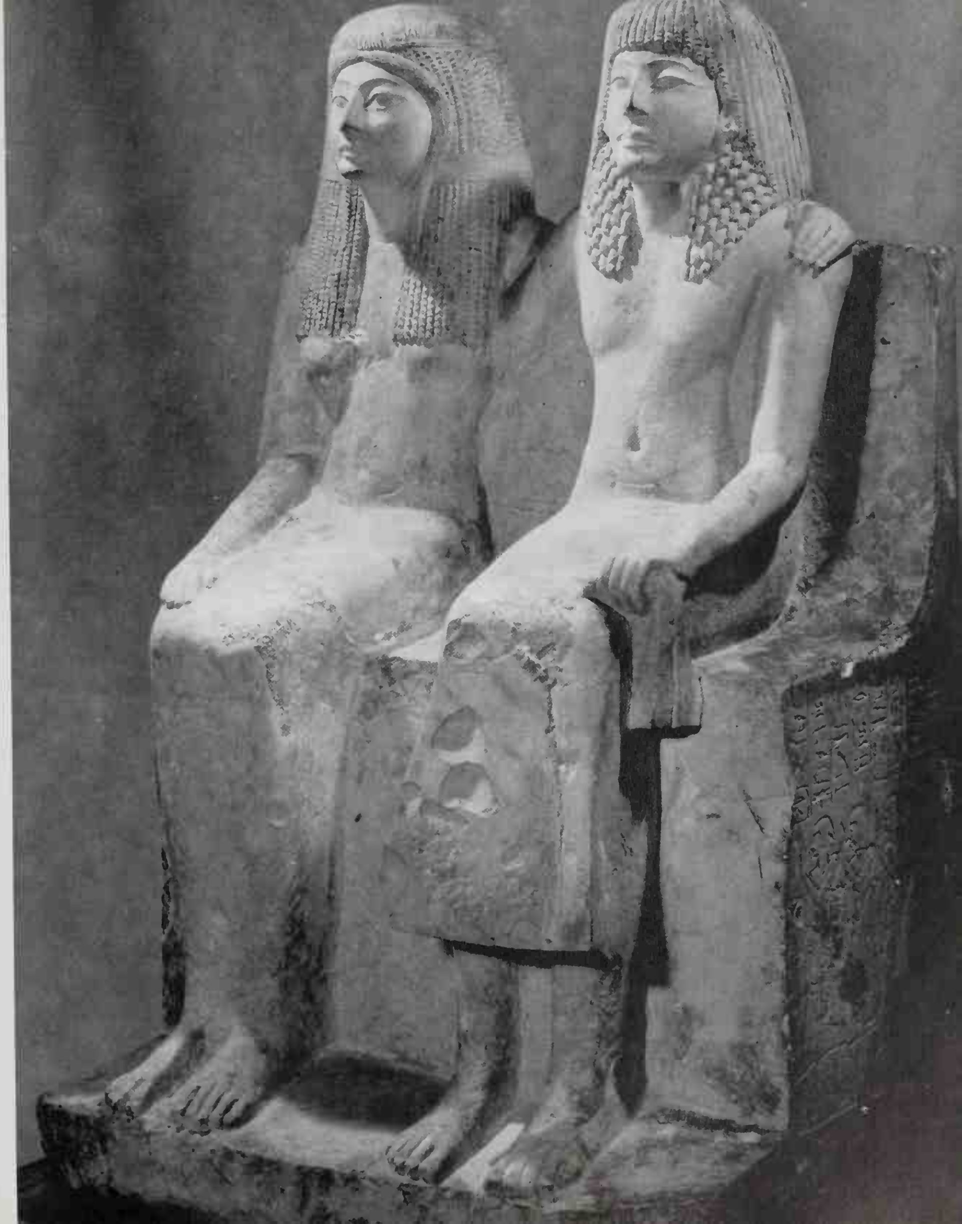
The chief priest of Amon-Ra had himself portrayed as a scribe squatting on the floor, with a closed papyrus roll, and had the statue set up, with royal permission, in a court of the imperial temple at Karnak. One of his many titles (he also was chief priest of Ra-Atum and supervisor of the royal buildings) is that of "King's Scribe," and it was this function that probably led him to choose this form of statue. A strange feature is the baboon, which squats on the scribe's shoulders, with its front paws resting on his head. Anyone familiar with the symbolic language of texts and images knows, however, that this signifies the god Thoth, the god of wisdom and the patron of scribes and scholars (see page 212).

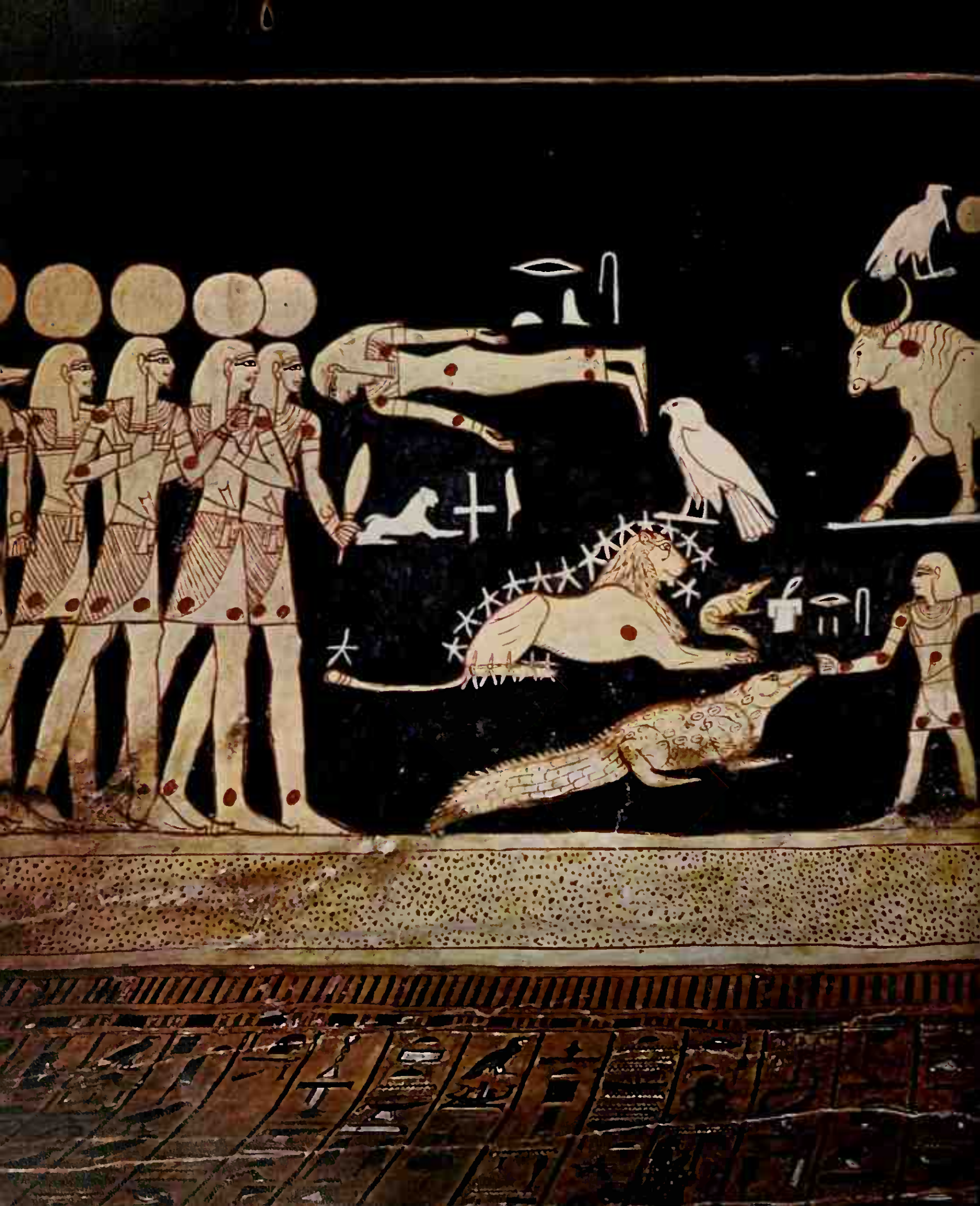
In the New Kingdom, setting up a statue in a temple increasingly became a privilege of priests, officials, and officers. The opportunity of proclaiming one's own fame to later generations was associated with the reassuring certitude of always participating in the ritual and the sacrifices to the gods. This also assured continued care if one's own death cult should cease or be interrupted in any way.

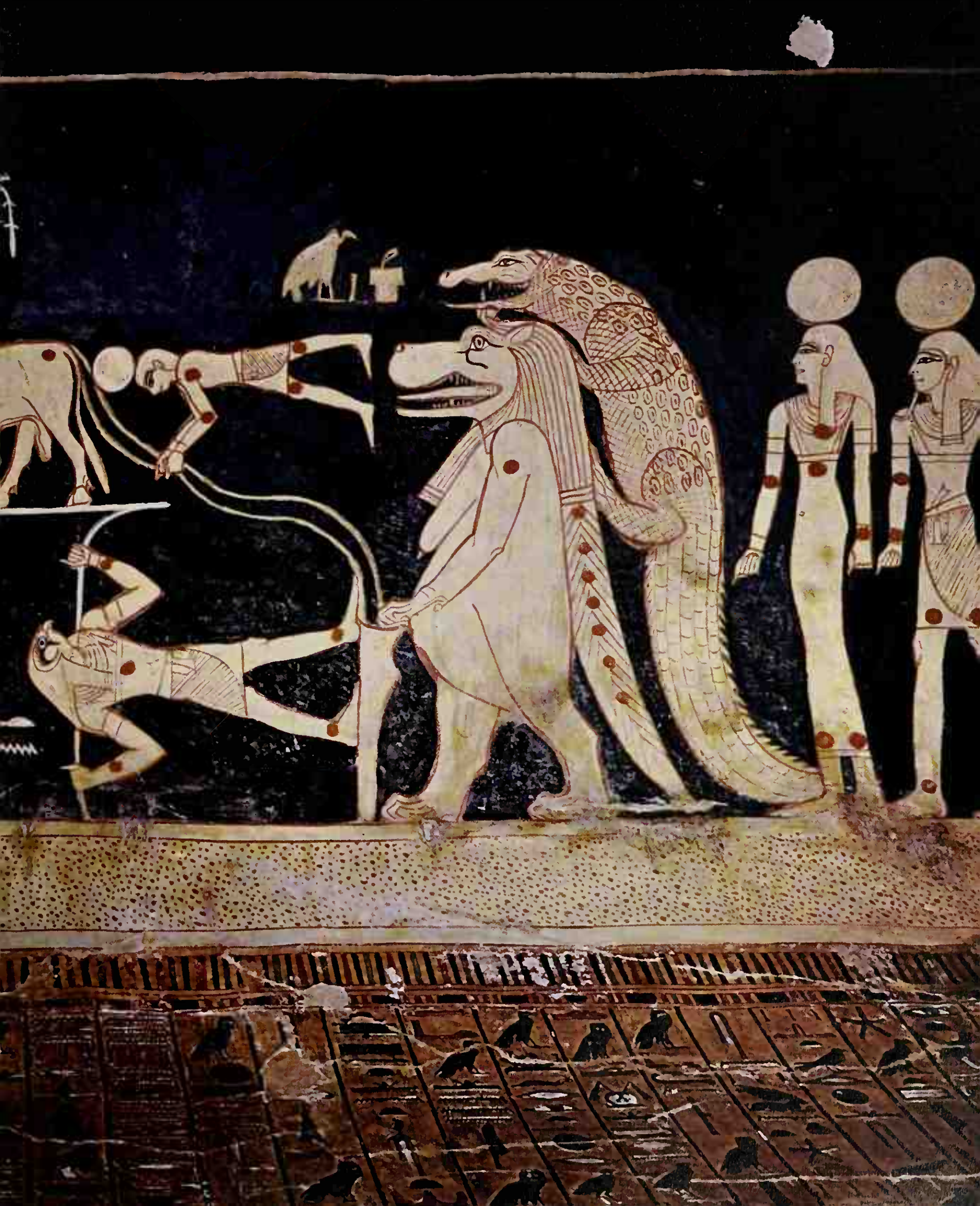
Ramsesnakht, the high priest of Amon. Granite, height $31^1/_2$". New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1150–1000 B.C. From the temple of Amon at Karnak. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

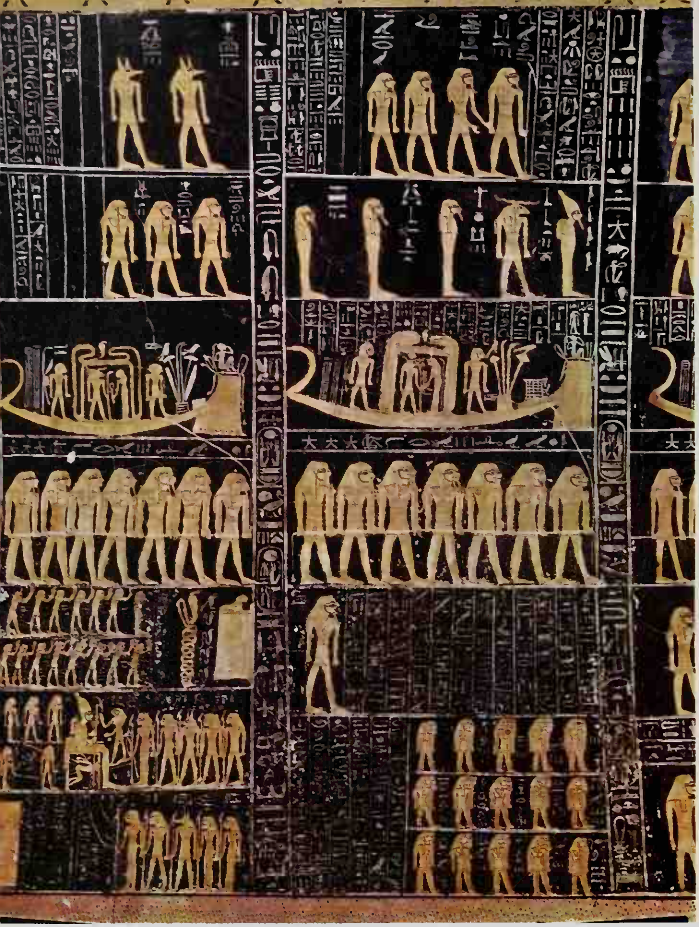
Pendua and his wife Nofretere. Limestone, height 31". New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C. From Deir el Medineh. Egyptian Museum, Turin ▶

The motif of the embracing married couple is probably as old as the desire to enjoy continued earthly family bliss in the hereafter. Nor is this anything more than simply another variant of the powerful fundamental motif: the vanquishing of death by the renewal of life. The "loop of rebirth" in the man's hand raises this group above a mere portrayal of a married couple. The couple's numerous children, who are shown on the side and rear walls of the seat they share, are also subordinated to the main idea, for it is chiefly through the children that some form of afterlife is hoped for.









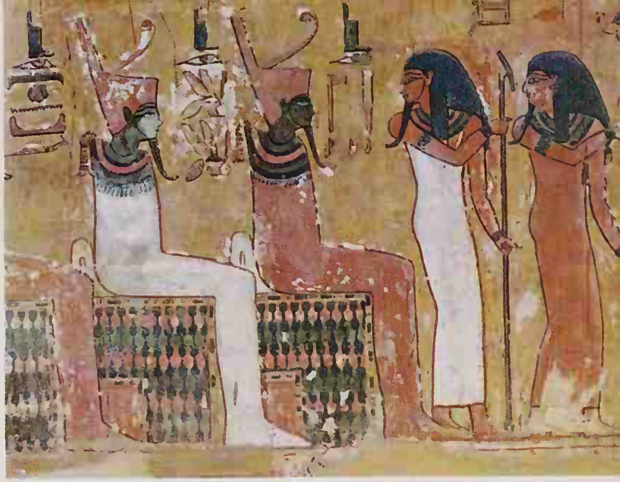
Passage of the sun through the night, from the tomb of Rameses IV in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (No. 9). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1140 B.C.

The passage of the sun through the different hours of the night is depicted and commented on in pictures that sometimes repeat themselves. The vertical lines give the names of the gates to be passed as the hour changes (the open leaf of a door is visible at the bottom left). The sun-god in his nocturnal ram's-head shape stands in the sun barge, whose crew of oarsmen is seen in the panels below, alongside the inscription "The Untiring." These are the stars which travel tirelessly the length and breadth of the sky.

◀ The tomb of Sety I is one of the largest, most often visited and admired royal tombs at Thebes. The night sky, adorned with pictures of the constellations, arches over the sarcophagus of the king. The central figure in the northern sky is the Bull (which corresponds to our Great Bear).

◀ Previous spread: The night sky, on the vaulted ceiling in the sarcophagus chamber of the tomb of Sety I in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (No. 17). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1305–1290 B.C.

The god Orion, king of the stars, who turns to look at the god of the underworld, stands in two manifestations before four seated Osiris figures (only the two at the right are shown completely). This relationship between the two gods of the night can be seen as early as the coffins of the Herakleopolis period (Ninth and Tenth Dynasties), where the Orion inscription reads: "Turn your face to see Osiris." Other texts make Orion and Osiris equals; in other words, Orion, too, has become a manifestation of Osiris.

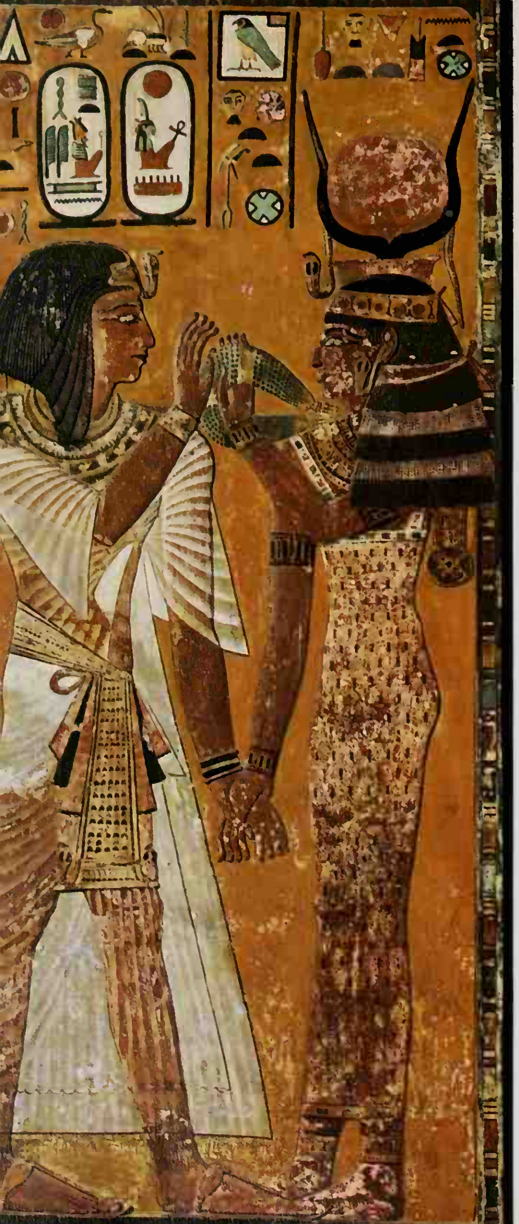


Detail of the *Amduat*, the "Book of the Hereafter" (third hour of the night), in the tomb of Sety I in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1305–1290 B.C.

The royal tombs represented an endeavor to reconstruct the realm of the hereafter, in which the sun's nightly rejuvenation took place. The walls of the corridors and chambers are covered with strange pictures, which depict the mystery of this transformation in many detailed scenes, though their final interpretation is still incomplete. Numerous traditional ideas are fused together here and subjected to a pattern of order, the individual elements of which do not, however, fit together without contradiction (nor should this be expected of matters of faith and dogma, which defy logic in every religion). These apparent contradictions simply result from the attempt to make the ultimately incomprehensible understandable. By making some gigantic animal, such as the "sky-cow," function as the sky, the path of the sun may then be said to pass along the body of the cow by day. In the evening the sun is swallowed by the maternal cow, so that its return to the eastern horizon passes through the animal's body. This night sky of the other world is situated above the sky of day.

According to other notions, the sun passes through the underworld. *Amduat*, the "Book of the Hereafter," which provides the most important wall decorations of the royal tombs, together with the "Book of Portals," contains "What Is in the Underworld [*Duat*]." The realm of the hereafter is divided into the twelve hours of the night; one hour after the other, one chamber after the other, has to be traversed. Each new hour region is blocked by a new gate, which is opened by magic words. The inhabitants of the underworld are struck by the rays of the sun during the short hour in which the sun-god passes, and are resuscitated briefly (unless they are condemned to suffer the eternal tortures of hell). The radiant power of the sun-god has become so overwhelming that he can appear here in the underworld as a triumphant dispenser of light, although he requires the renewal of his strength himself, experiencing this rejuvenation through his temporary fusion with Osiris.

The king, who has become a god in death, wishes to achieve the same fate as the sun-god. Thus, the pictures in his tomb basically effect his own resurrection.



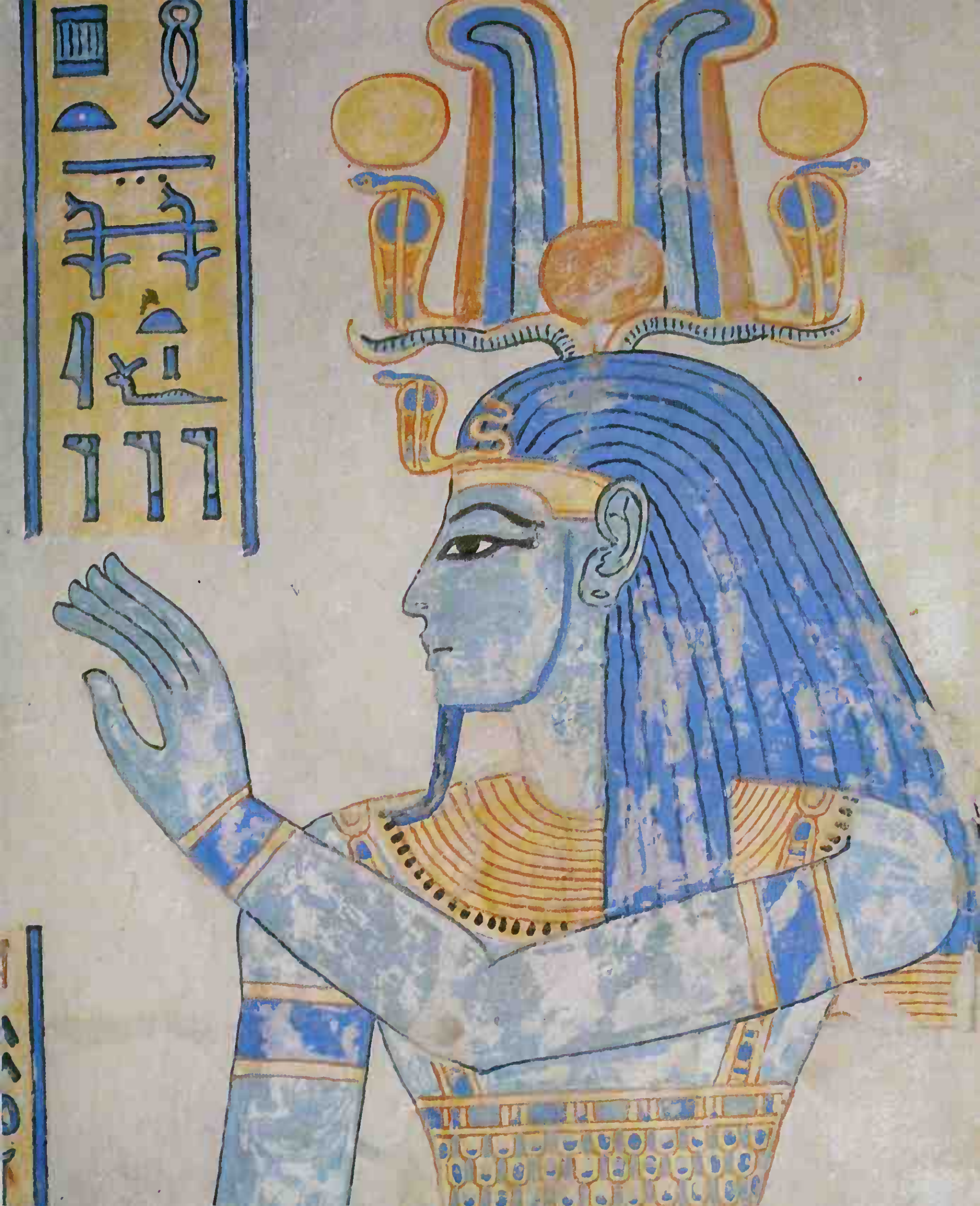
Door pillar. Limestone, height 88½". New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1305–1290 B.C. From the tomb of Sety I in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. Archaeological Museum, Florence

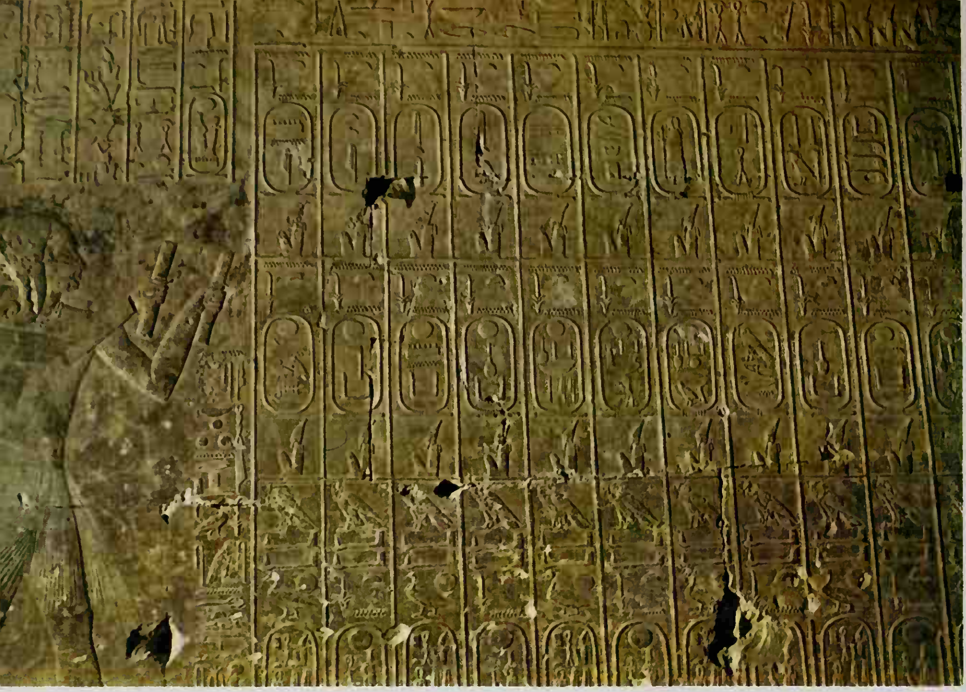
This scene shows Sety I meeting Hathor, as a variation on the theme of the dead king being received by the goddess of the sky (cf. pages 150–51). The goddess extends her opened necklace to the king, a gesture that may be interpreted as a sign of surrender. The tenderly clasped hands also speak an eloquent language.

This reception of the king by the sky-goddess is the greatly softened and humanized form of the old wish to return in death to the body of the sky-goddess in animal form, in order to be reborn from her womb. As the sky-cow, Hathor swallows her son, the sun-god, at evening. As an anthropomorphized goddess she receives her son, the dead king, by the act of physical union.

Ptah, who usually appears in mummy form, is depicted here with the royal insignia (ram's-horn crown and uraeus snake), to which he is entitled as residence god of Memphis (see page 167). The inscription refers, not to the kingly god, but to the creator, who is apostrophized as "Primeval Hill" (Tatenen, meaning "the rising land") and as "Father of the Gods."

The god Ptah greets Prince Amon-khepshef, presented by his royal father in the hereafter. Wall painting in the tomb of the prince, a son of Ramesses III, in the Valley of the Queens (No. 55). New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1170 B.C. ▶





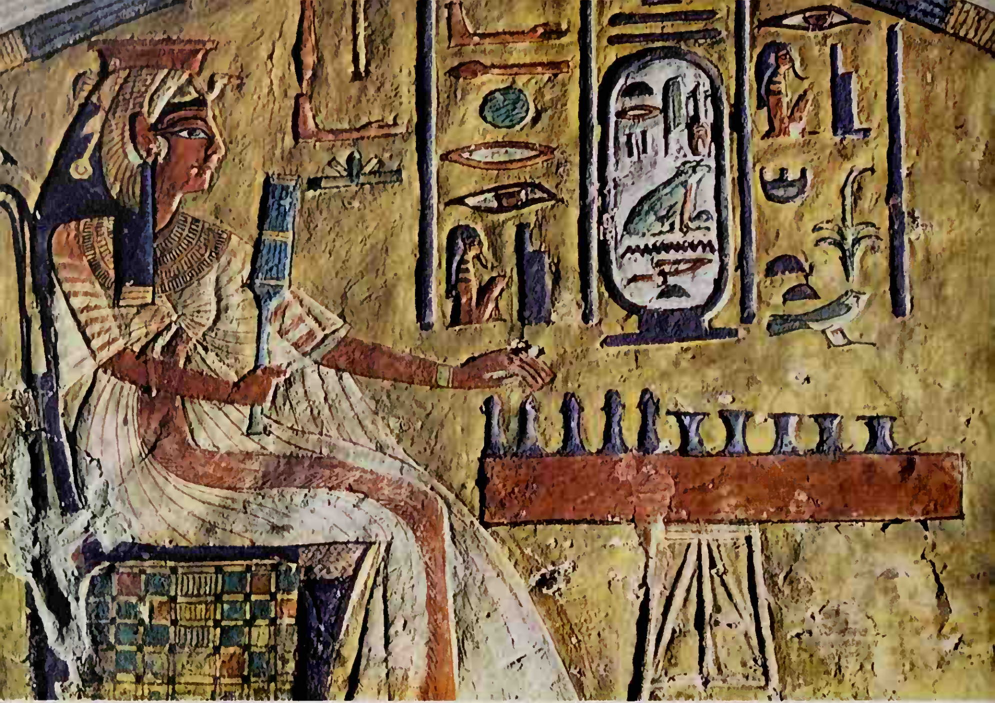
King list in the temple of Sety I at Abydos. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1305–1290 B.C.

The great Hall of Columns in the mortuary temple of Ramesses II ▶ at Thebes. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, 1290–1225 B.C.

The past, present, and future of Pharaonic history are brought together in the scene showing King Sety I, assisted by his son, Prince Ramesses (later Ramesses II), sacrificing to his royal ancestors. The prince unrolls a papyrus roll and recites the ritual praises of his ancestors, whose hieroglyphs appear beneath the cartouches containing their names.

The king list begins at the upper left with the name of Meni, the legendary founder of the First Dynasty, who is listed as Menes in Manetho's king list (beginning of the second century B.C.). These lists afford researchers valuable assistance in reconstructing the history of ancient Egypt, although it is revealing that they omit Queen Hatshepsut, as well as the outlawed kings of the Tell el Amarna period: Akhenaten, Tutankhamon, and Ay.

The ceilings of the three high center aisles are supported by columns whose capitals are in the shape of opened papyrus umbels, while the lower side aisles employ bud capitals (cf. page 103). The king is depicted on the columns in the act of sacrificing to the gods. As in all the mortuary temples west of Thebes, the national god Amon was worshiped together with the dead king. Amon left his main temple on the east bank on feast days and visited the west bank in ceremonial procession.

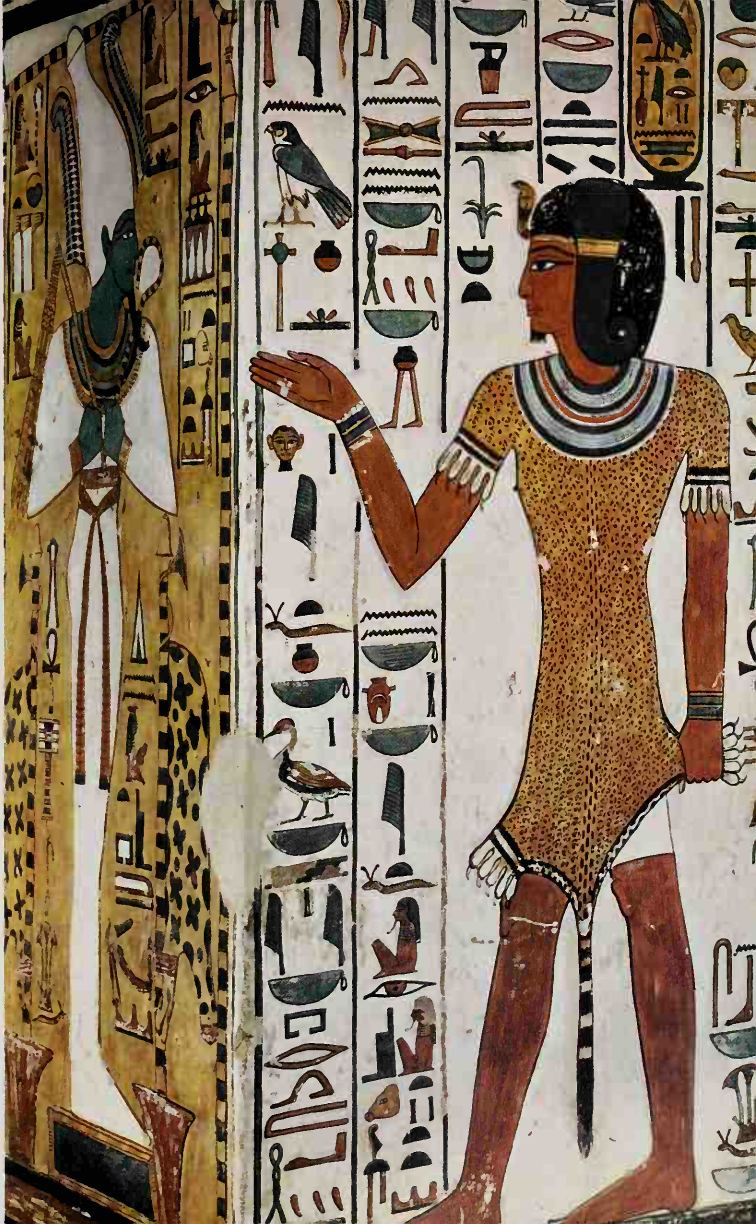


Ramesses II built a tomb, whose paintings are among the masterpieces of the Nineteenth Dynasty, for his favorite consort Nofretari in the Valley of the Queens ("Biban el Harim"), where, following the pattern of the dwellings of the living royal family, the princes also had their last resting places. Unfortunately, the layer of loam on the limestone walls is being gradually destroyed, so that the paintings created for eternity will survive in the future only in reproductions. All the pictures deal with life in the hereafter: the meeting with the gods, and the entry into the realm of eternity.

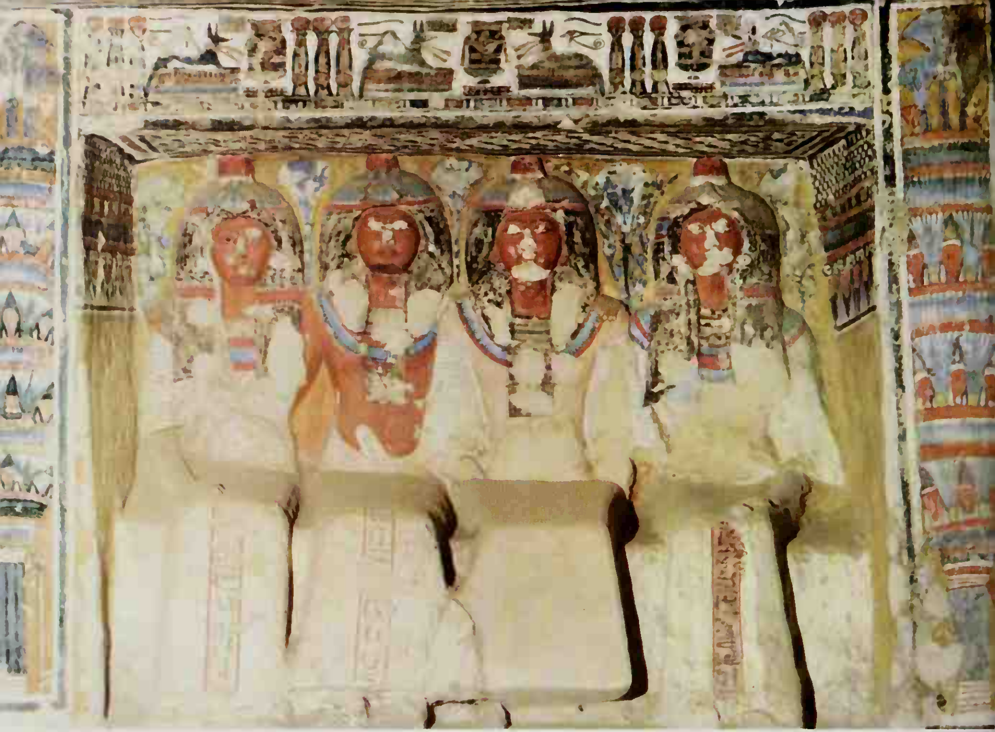
A superficial examination of the picture of the queen playing a game might lead us to conclude: "She was apparently happiest when spending the hours of leisure in eternity with such trifles. Could a modern lady of leisure imagine that she would be playing patience in heaven?" (A. Mekhitarian). But when we consider the ambiguity of the pictures and the symbolic content of the game played on a board, and when we inquire into the significance of the scepter held by the queen in her barely concealed lap, we find that nothing less than the queens's survival, the preservation of her fertility, and the warding off of hostile demons are involved. This, and not trifling reasons, is why the "board-game motif" is found in the Book of the Dead, whose purpose is simply the vanquishing of death.

◀ Queen Nofretari playing a board game. Painted relief on stucco in her tomb in the Valley of the Queens at Thebes (No. 66). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.

The son and avenger of Osiris, murdered and dismembered by Seth, is called "Horus Who Avenges His Father" (Harendotes). Here he intercedes with his father for Queen Nofretari. His panther skin, like those in the Osiris chapel, symbolizes his ability to piece the body together again.



Harendotes in front of Osiris. Pillar in the tomb of Nofretari in the Valley of the Queens at Thebes. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.



Niche in the tomb of Neferronpet at Thebes (No. 178). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.

The tombs of the Ramesside period are linked to the Eighteenth Dynasty as far as their arrangement and decorations are concerned, but they do manifest an unmistakable change in the themes chosen.

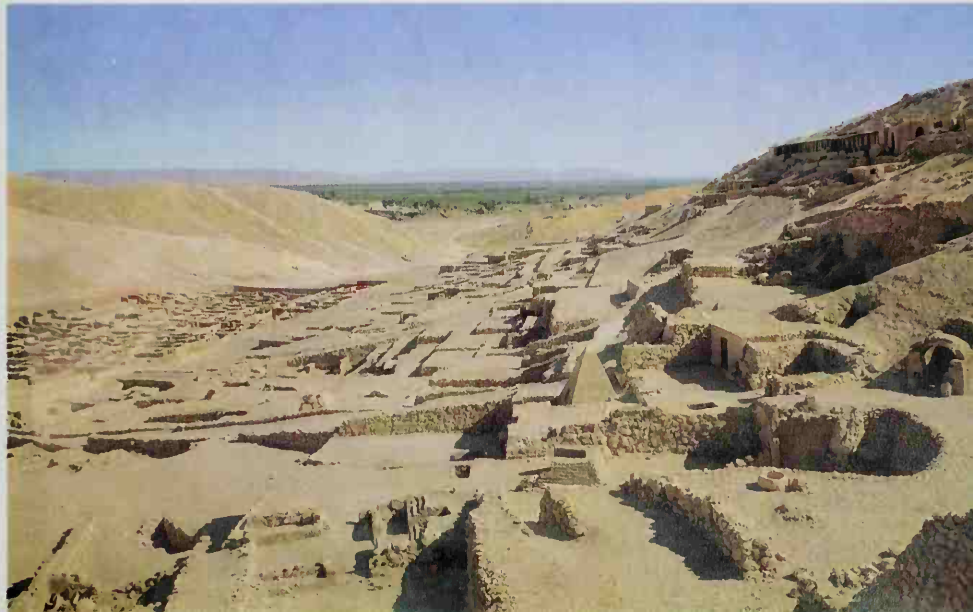
The married couples still sit together clad in festive garb (cf. pages 114–15), but the cheerfulness and easygoing attitudes of the older period, accompanied by music and dance, are repressed. Solemn, grave, and decorous, Neferronpet, the lord of the tomb (second from the right) is seated with his consort Mutemwia (far right) and another pair within a niche of the tomb to receive the offerings. The niche is enclosed on both sides by bundle columns, but the painted frieze above the heads of the dead clearly shows the new trend in subject matter. Henceforth the elements of the hereafter and the cult of the dead predominate: the symbols of the solar cycle (eye of the sun and horizon jackals, between which the head of Hathor, the sky-goddess, appears) are employed to link the fate of the dead with the rising and setting sun. Other pictures will work this idea out still further (see page 188): the gods and the heavenly powers, the priests and mummy attendants, come to the fore, while earthly elements of life in the hereafter become less important. This even went so far as having the older tombs reworked in the Ramesside period, so that the all too lightly clad girls were painted over and reclothed in high-necked gowns.

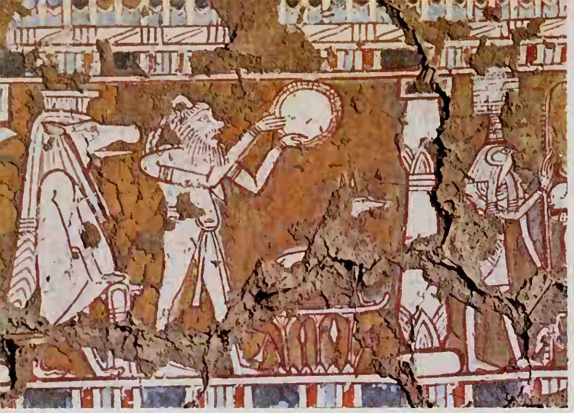
The quarry workmen, the stonecutters, the sculptors, and the painters employed in building and decorating the kings' tombs (as well as private ones) lived in a settlement west of Thebes, isolated from the rest of the world. Yet even this arrangement, which was designed to prevent disclosure or exploitation of their knowledge of the site and furnishings of the royal tombs, was unable to stop grave robbing.

Deir el Medineh was a real artists' colony, and numerous ostraka provide us with very precise information about living customs there. Sketches on potsherds (see page 197) show the preliminary stages of projected paintings.

Opposite the settlement, toward the west (at the right of the picture), lie the tombs of the people of Deir el Medineh. These tombs are peculiar in that, here, the artists were their own patrons, so that very many more individual features are to be found with respect to style, choice of motifs, and carefulness of execution. Once little pyramids (reconstructed today) stood above the entrances to the corridors leading into the mountain.

City and burial area of the necropolis workers of Western Thebes at Deir el Medineh. New Kingdom



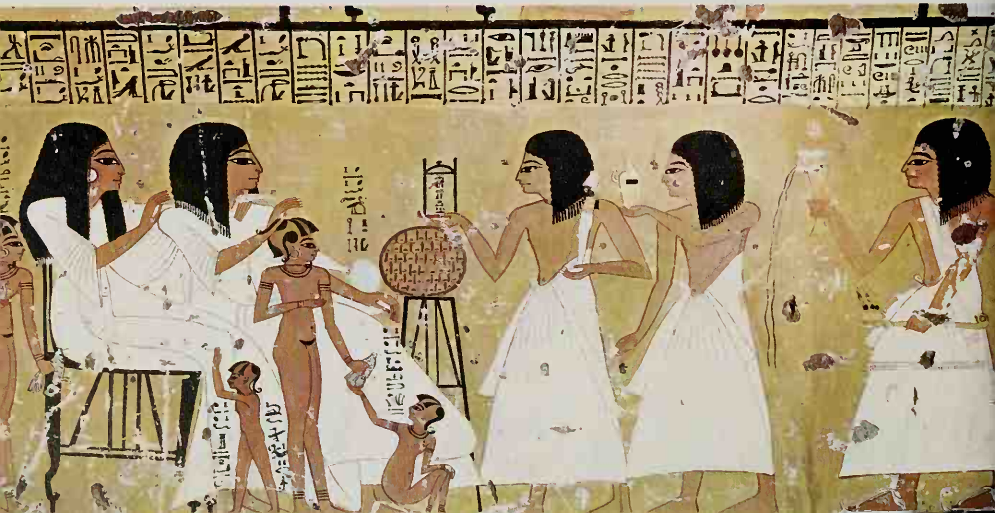


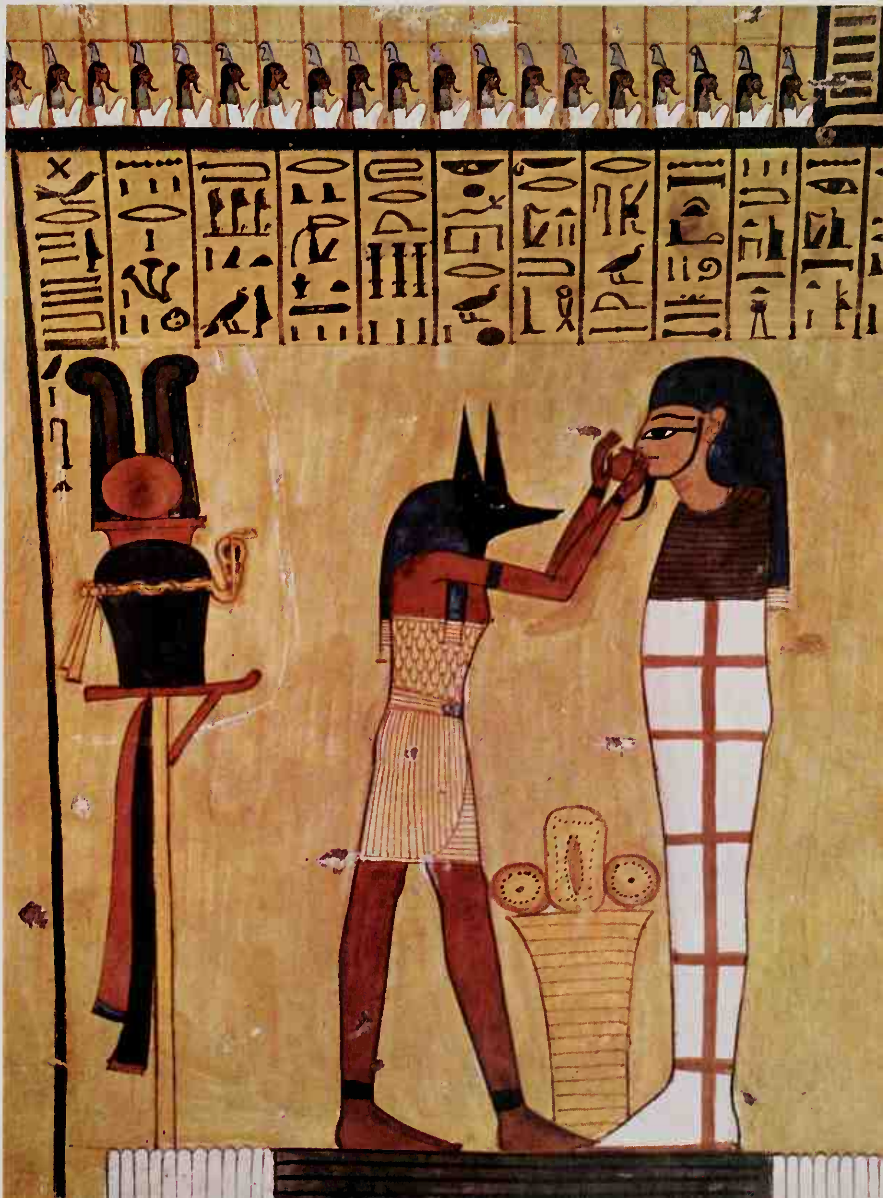
◀ Detail of a wall painting in the tomb of the sculptor Ipy in Deir el Medineh at Thebes (No. 217). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.

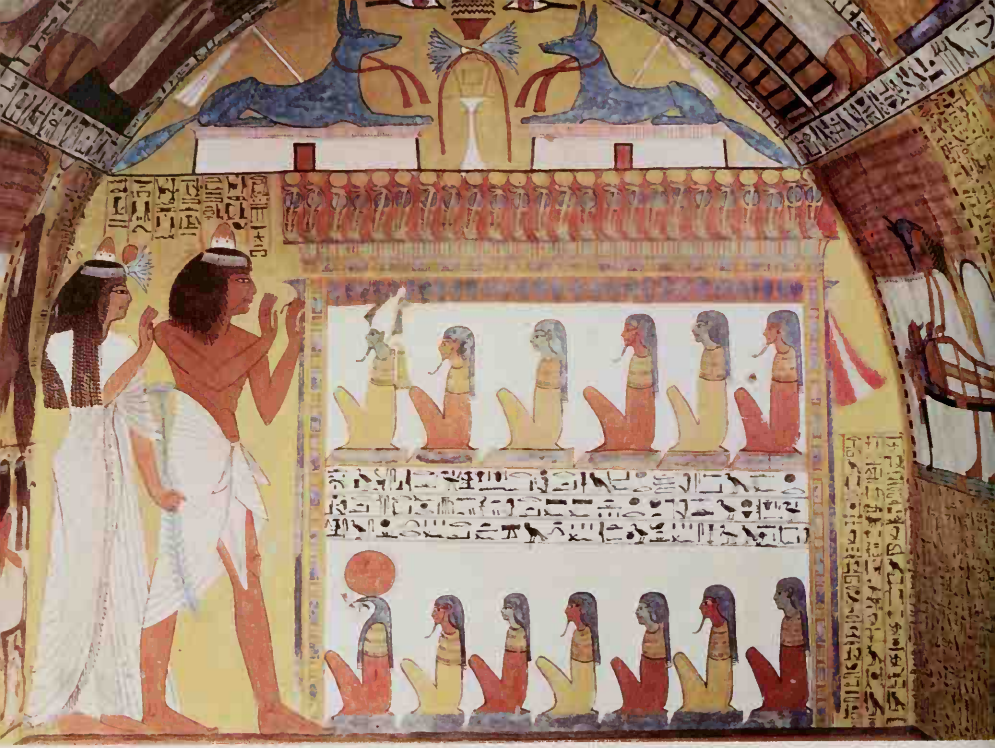
The sculptor Ipy has depicted in his tomb the work of the royal necropolis. The paintings on the outer walls of a chapel exhibit the same caricaturing style that is also found within the tomb. It probably amused him to treat the themes that he had to delineate academically and solemnly in the royal tombs with a careless hand in his own. Thueris, the goddess of birth, seems quite conventional in her hippopotamus form. But the god Bes, who, like her, is responsible for safe delivery and the lying-in period, has become a thin-legged old man who frightens away evil demons with his tambourine; and the hawk-headed god Horus, with his spindly limbs, is now a pure caricature.

Surrounded by his family, the lord of the tomb (below) receives offerings from priests of Osiris and Ptah: a box containing ushabti figures (see page 158) and a statue of Osiris, together with libations of water and incense. On the facing page, Anubis presents the dead man's mummy with his heart, thus resuscitating him. ▶

Paintings in the tomb of Khai-inheret in Deir el Medineh, Thebes (No. 299/359). New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1150 B.C.







Tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el Medineh at Thebes (No. 1). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.

The shift in accent that we find in the design of the Ramesside tombs is clearly manifest in this, the most celebrated tomb of Deir el Medineh. Little space is devoted to the scene of the festival meal (at the bottom of the left side wall); the mummy (in the middle register of both side walls) is a reminder of the fact of death. The whole end wall of the vault, however, is devoted to the central theme of belief in the hereafter: the resurrection of the dead, following the pattern set by the sun, which experiences an ever-recurring rejuvenation by its nightly fusion with Osiris.

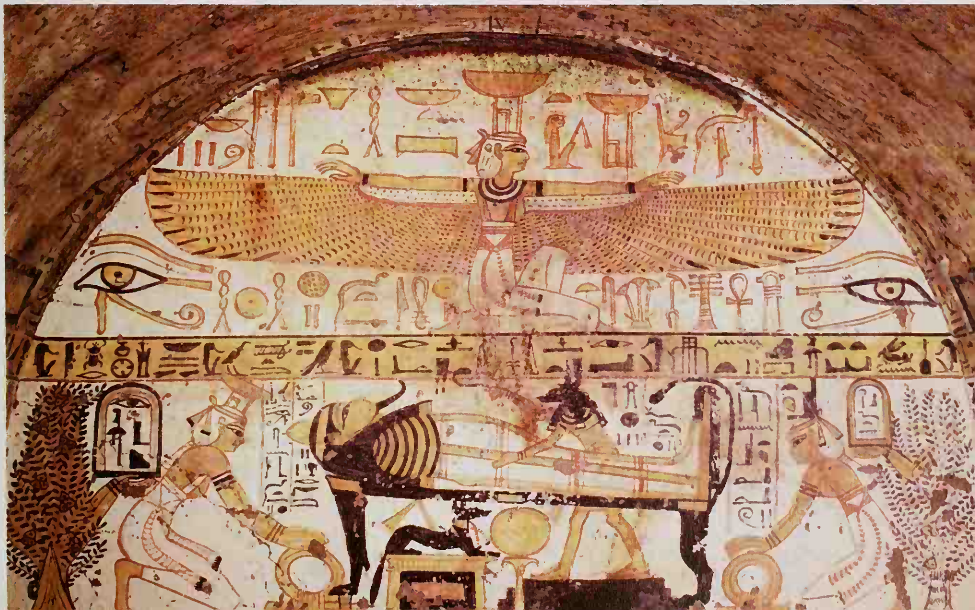
The sun-god Ra (bottom row) and Osiris, god of the dead (above him), are the two great gods whose collaboration maintains the eternal cycle of life (which is why the concept "eternity" consists of two words for the Egyptians, these two words being associated with Ra and Osiris, respectively). The dead man, who is accompanied by his wife, addresses his song of praise to these two gods. The gods are seated together in a chapel, on whose ceiling the movement of the sun through the circle of the sky is depicted in twenty-four separate phases. The vault of the sky also constitutes the rounded upper edge of the wall (cf., for example, the stele on page 28). The two dogs lying on chests are variants of the lions that symbolize the eastern and western horizons.

The two eyes are the rising and setting sun. In other words, here too, the circle of eternal life is completed by the interplay of ascent and descent, of birth and death.

In another variation of the theme we have just discussed, here the inclusion of the dead man in the cycle of "Die and Spring to Life" is depicted in the cosmos and in nature. The mummy, lying on a lion-bed (cf. page 147), is resuscitated by Anubis, the god of embalmment, who embraces him and opens his mouth. The two divine sisters, Isis (at the right) and Nephthys (at the left), lamenting their dead brother Osiris, guarding him, and helping him to resurrection in the shape of his mythological son Horus, kneel at either end of the mummy's bier. They have placed their hands on the symbol of the eternal cycle, the linkage of the two eternities, thus proclaiming the *leitmotif* of this scene. Two tree-deities present the chest of Osiris (at the left) and that of the "Ruler of Eternity" (at the right) to the dead man, who has himself become Osiris.

The whole cycle is divided into the Ra and Osiris phases in the hieroglyph strip that separates the lower scene from the upper. Running symmetrically from the center outward, the inscriptions record a prayer to the sun-god Ra-Horakhte (toward the left) and to Osiris, the god of the dead (toward the right). An eye is assigned to each of these two gods in the upper register; the eastern eye, the rising sun (at the left), which is situated higher than the western one (cf. page 28), belongs to Ra; and the western eye, the setting sun (at the right) belongs to Osiris. Beneath the vault of heaven, the goddess Nephthys kneels as the "Mistress of the Sky." Her arms and wings are outstretched to offer protection and a welcome to the dead man gazing up to her.

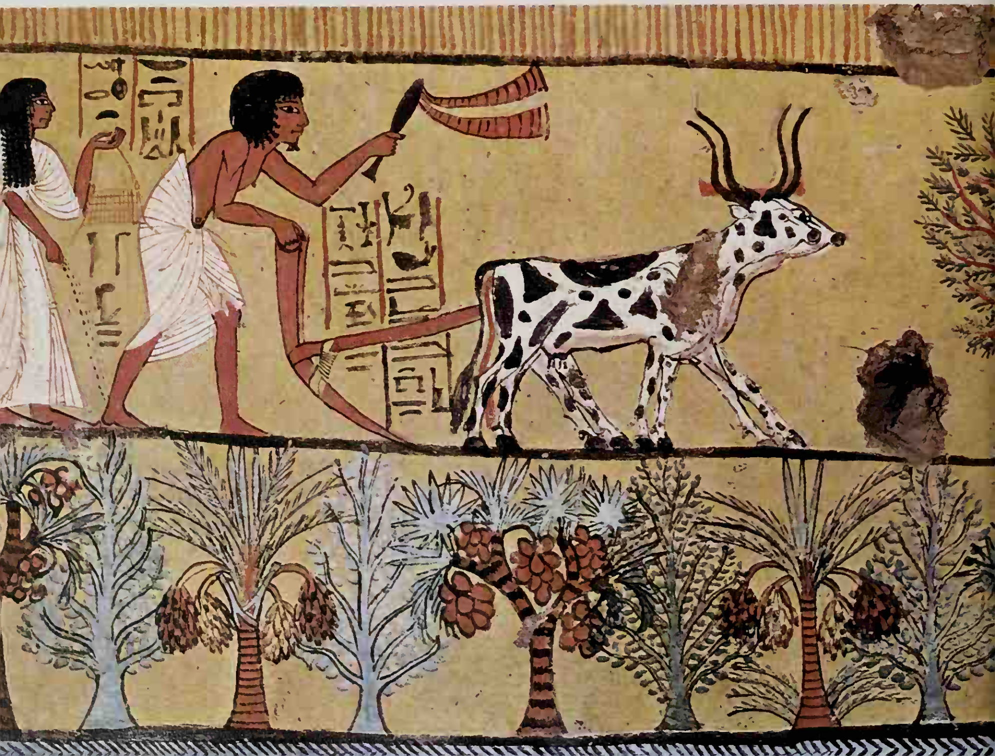
Wall painting in the tomb of Khabekhnet in Deir el Medineh at Thebes (No. 2). New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.

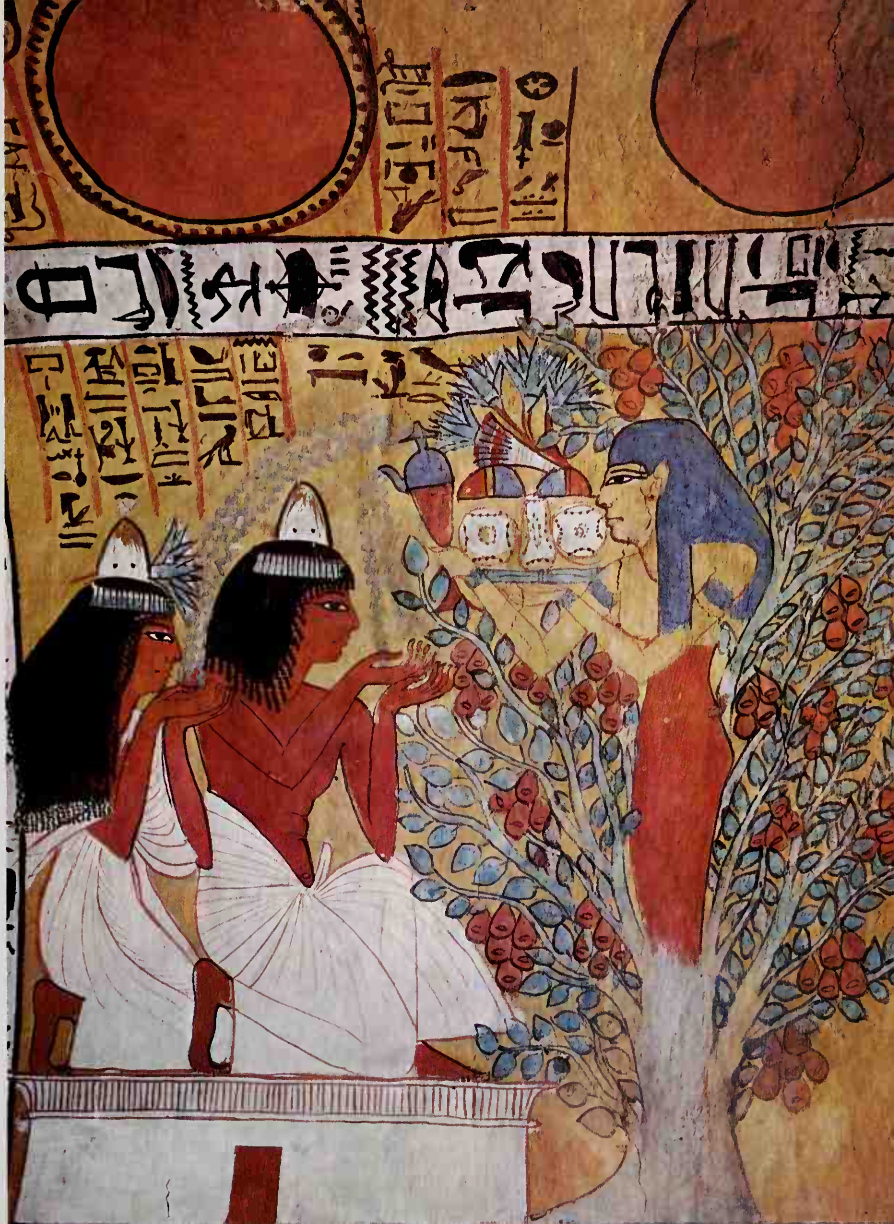


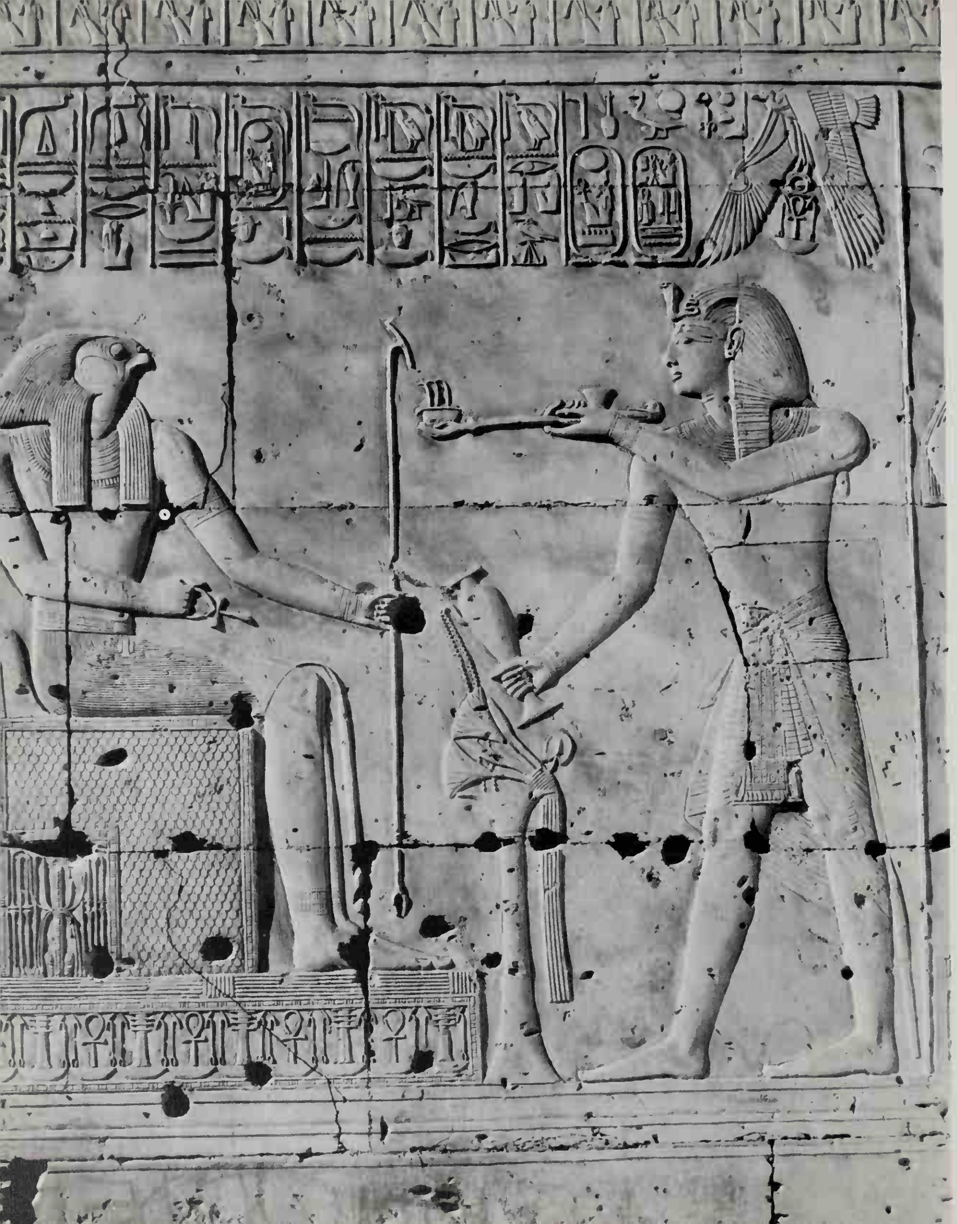
The "Field of the Blessed" became a favorite motif of the tombs. This garden of paradise (below) has watercourses running through it and has a thick growth of palms and sycamores. Instead of having an ushabti represent him at work in the fields, the dead man is doing his own plowing, while his wife follows and sows the seed. Their gala clothing discloses that these are not scenes of terrestrial agriculture (cf. page 120) merely transferred to the hereafter, but that the plowing and sowing by the married couple have acquired a ritual-religious significance that has to be considered in terms of the other pictures.

The dead man and his wife kneel before Nut, the sky-goddess, who appears here in her shape as a tree and ▶ offers the dead man food and drink. In the mind of the ancient Egyptians, the sky could be depicted in at least three variants: as an animal, as a woman, or as a tree. The deity is female in all three cases, functioning both as a dispenser of life and as a goddess of the dead. Here the artist has succeeded in combining two of these variants—tree and woman—into a unified image, for parts of the body (especially the arms) of the goddess, growing out of the sycamore's trunk, conform organically to the branches of the tree.

Wall paintings in the tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el Medineh, Thebes. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, thirteenth century B.C.





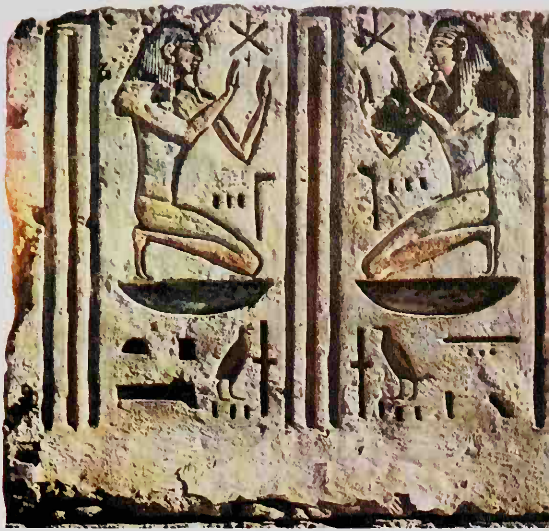


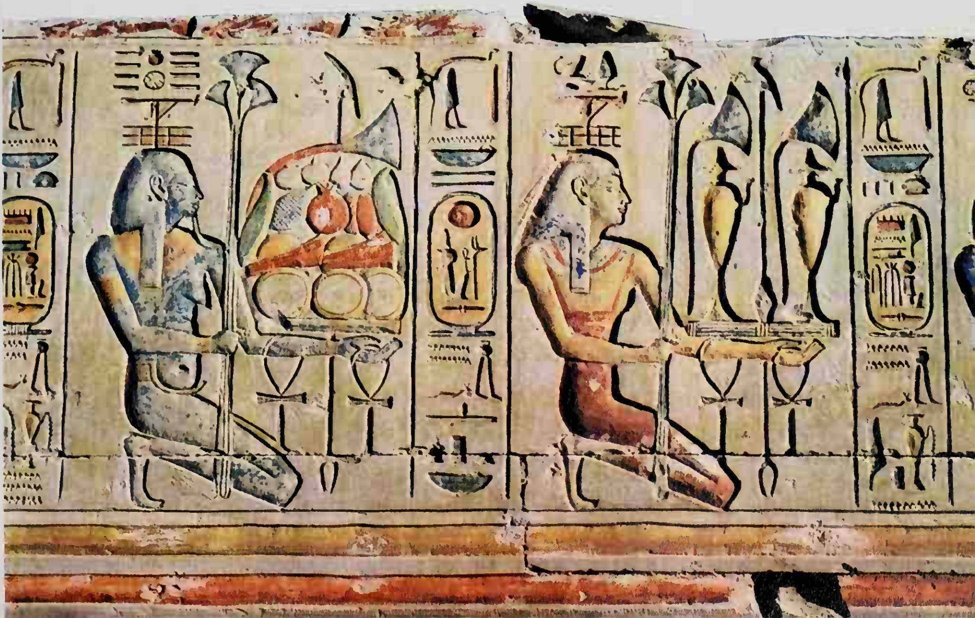
Changes in relief carving in the temples of the Ramesside period:

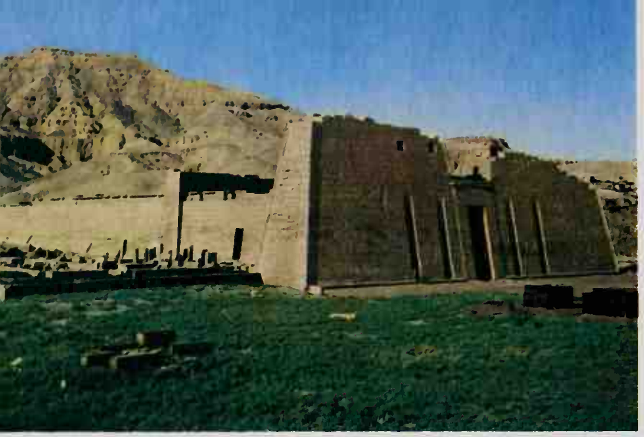
Facing page: Temple of King Sety I at Abydos. Masterfully modeled relief done in fine limestone. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1305–1290 B.C.
The king offers incense and a libation of water to the god Sokar; the god, in turn, hands him the symbols of life and endurance

Below: Temple of King Ramesses II at Abydos. Relief incised into limestone. New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1290–1225 B.C.
Detail of the procession of personifications of the Egyptian nomes, which are bringing the king their offerings. They wear the hieroglyph groups of their names on their heads

Right: Mortuary temple of King Ramesses III in Medinet Habu at Thebes. Roughly incised relief with very deeply carved hieroglyphs. New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1185–1155 B.C.
Pillars in the barge sanctuary: adoration of the gods in the sky (at the left) and of the gods on earth (at the right)







Mortuary temple of King Ramesses III in Medinet Habu at Thebes. New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1185–1155 B.C. In the background, the Western Mountain of Thebes, behind which the royal tombs are situated

Ramesses III, the last great Ramesside king (he was succeeded by eight more sovereigns bearing the same name), placed his mortuary temple close to an older temple, in which a mysterious primeval creator-god, who is considered to be the ancestor of Amon, the king of the gods, was worshiped.

In addition to religious cycles of pictures, the walls of the well-preserved structure depict the king's victories over his enemies, advancing with vast masses of troops. The Libyans, who were successfully repulsed by Merenptah, the successor of Ramesses II (Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1225–1205 B.C.), had attempted to attack again. The so-called "Sea Peoples" had again appeared on the scene, in greater strength than before. This massive wave of tribes, which had been originally started by movements in the region of the Danube and the Balkans, tried to invade Egypt by sea and by land simultaneously. Ramesses III managed to defeat the intruders decisively in a combined sea and land battle at the mouths of the Nile. The members of these tribes (Sardinians, Philistines, Sicilians, and Greeks) are portrayed in Medinet Habu, with all their ethnological peculiarities, as the subjugated enemies of the Pharaoh.

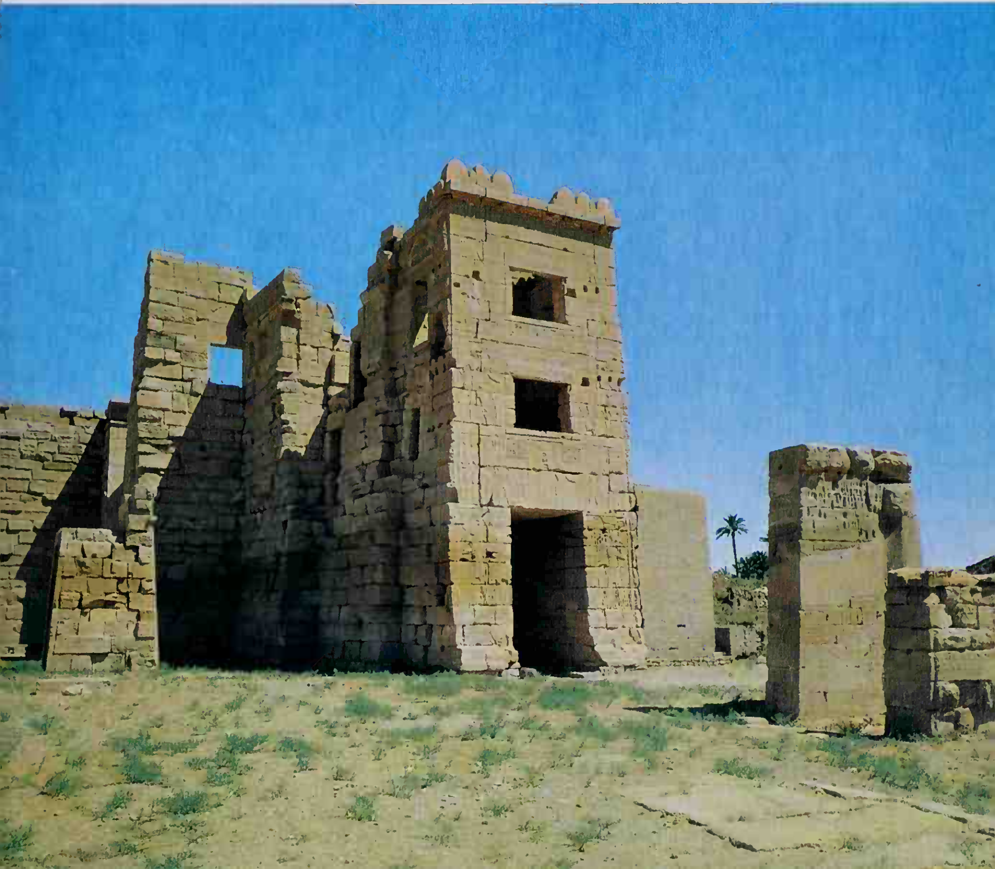
The defensive battles against external enemies weakened the state and resulted in economic difficulties. Unrest among the workers of the necropolis because of the lack of food supplies led to the first organized strike. The political authorities, partially paralyzed by corrupt officials, were scarcely able to maintain law and order. The erection of a high wall right round the temple area must be regarded in the light of this grave situation; and the king's palace (the ruins of which are visible at the left in the picture) was included within this fortresslike refuge for the powers of the state and its administrative organs.

The structure of the temple followed the usually obligatory canon: entrance pylon (cf. page 165); first court with rows of pillars and columns; second (smaller) pylon; second court; lastly, a series of colonnaded halls giving access to the sanctuary at the back of the temple. Passages ran from the two courts to the rooms of the palace. A "show window" in the wall between the palace and the first court enabled the Pharaoh to appear before the crowd assembled in the court, to accept their homage, and to confer decorations.

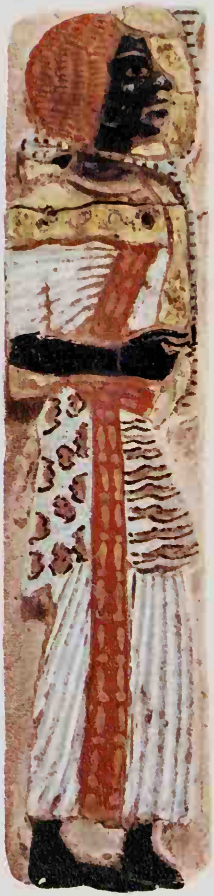
The entire complex of the temple area of Medinet Habu was enclosed by a fortress wall fifty-six feet high, which included the temple of Ramesses III, his palace, built to one side, the small Eighteenth Dynasty temple, the Sacred Lake, and the fountains.

The "High Gateway," the main eastern entrance, access to which was gained through a canal of the Nile, shows the king, on its outer walls, as victor over his enemies. All the more surprising are the interior decorations of the multistoried structure: the wall reliefs indicate that here in the airy upper floors, the king used to seek recreation, in the company of the ladies of his harem, from the stresses of battle and government.

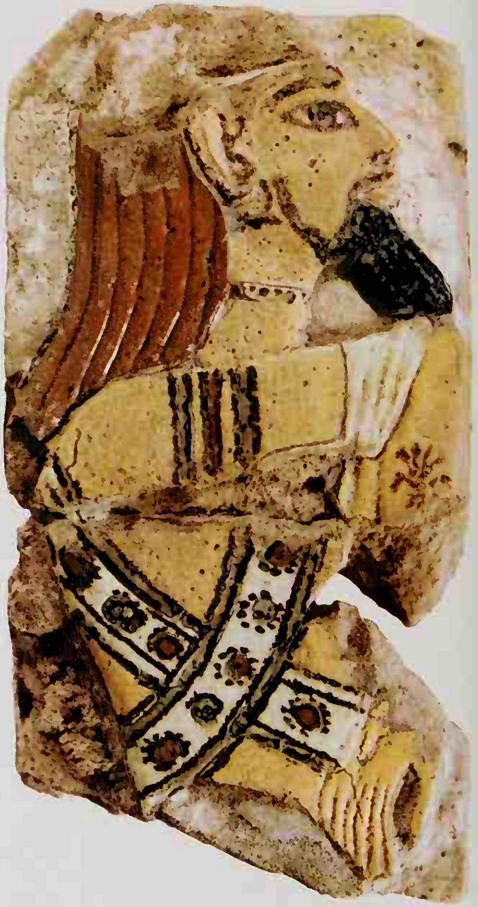
The High Gateway of Medinet Habu at Thebes. New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1185–1155 B.C.



Captive Nubian, in a hybrid Egyptian-Nubian costume (cf. page 127). To symbolize his captive state, he wears around his neck a papyrus stalk, the national plant of Egypt.



Captive Libyan, with all the distinctive traits of his race: yellow skin, red hair, colored band across his chest, and tattooing on his lower arm.



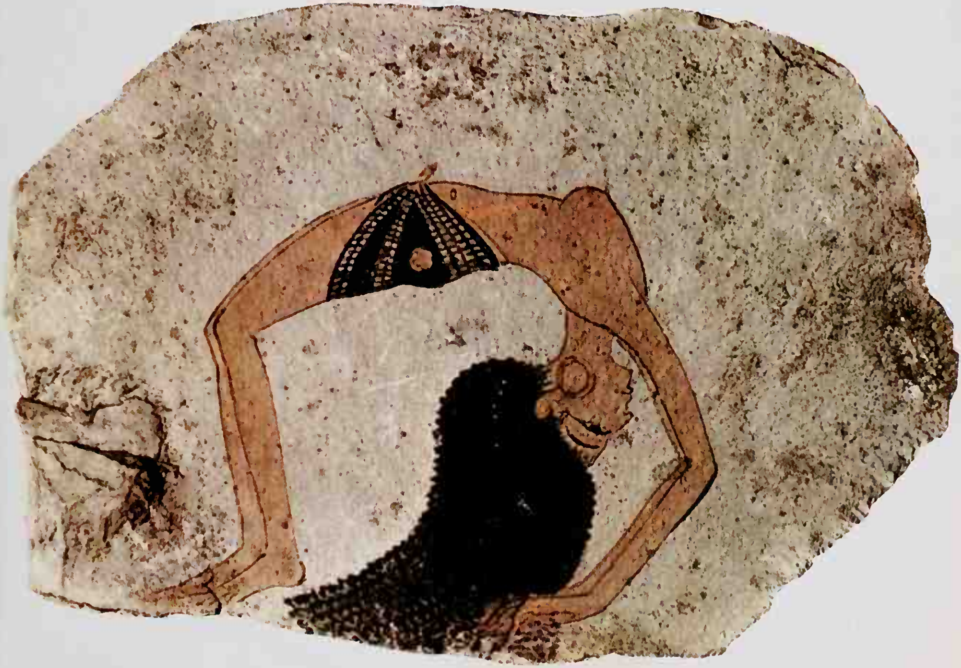
Decorative tiles. Faïence with colored incrustations and glazes, height (left) 9$^3/_4$", (right) 4$^3/_4$". New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1185–1155 B.C. From a palace of the Ramesside period, probably Medinet Habu. Kofler-Truniger Collection, Lucerne

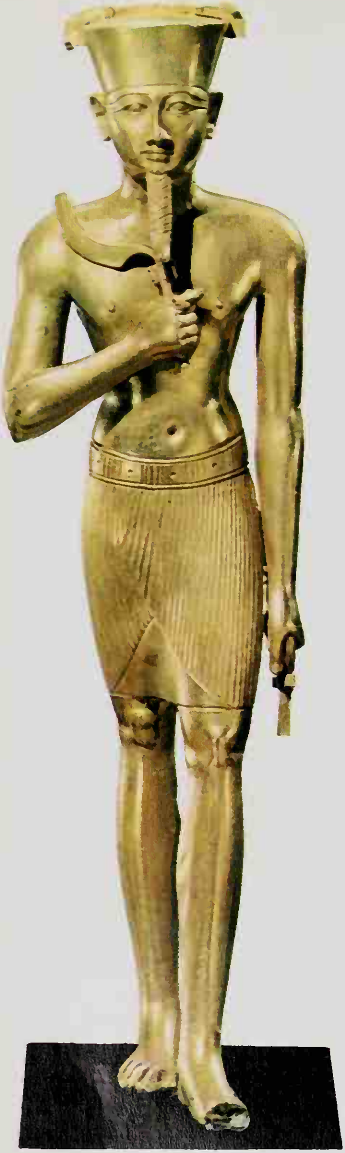
This limestone sherd may have come from the rubble of Deir el Medineh (see page 185). Preliminary sketches on this freely available material have also been found there, in addition to numerous ostraka with writing on them (accounts, receipts, and letters).

The slender dancing girl, clad in nothing but a colored cloth wrapped about her loins, has just performed a somersault; her long hair drags along the floor (whereas her earring steadfastly hangs upward). The strands of hair thrown back as far as her raised heels make the dancer's body into a closed circle.

Similar figures have been found as early as the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000 B.C.) in the form of little limestone statuettes. It is not certain whether this is a scene from a ritual dance or merely a form of worldly entertainment for guests.

Potsherd (ostrakon), used as a "sketch pad" for the drawing of an acrobatic dancing girl. Limestone, 4 × 6¾". New Kingdom, probably beginning of Nineteenth Dynasty, c. 1300 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Turin





LATE PERIOD

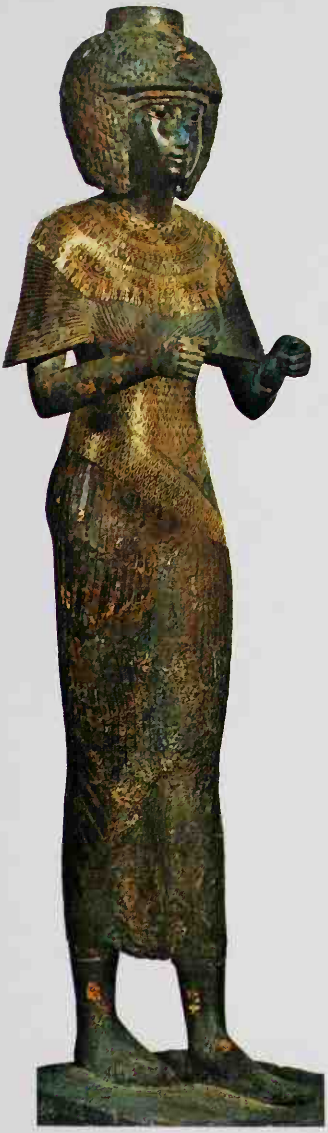
Twenty-First to Thirty-First Dynasties (c. 1070–332 B.C.)

One of the most convincing proofs of the high level of Late Egyptian art in the working of metal is this gold statuette of the king of the gods. In his right hand Amon (the tall feathers of whose crown are missing) holds the sickle sword; in his other, the symbol of life. The slim body of the god is masterfully modeled in all its details; the hands, the face, and the beard, in particular, manifest loving attention to detail.

Amon, king of the gods, had meanwhile extended his sway and had become "King of Egypt." Under the last of the Ramesside kings, the high priests of Thebes had managed to increase their influence until it was no longer the Pharaoh but Amon (and hence his high priests) who ruled Egypt. The king of this theocracy announced his wishes mainly through oracles. His high priest and executor on earth was named Herihor, who established the secessionist state of Upper Egypt with the support of the army.

The successors of the Ramessides, who now resided in Tanis (in the Delta), founded the Twenty-First Dynasty. In spite of their rivalry, the two ruling houses respected and intermarried with each other, for each side expected to gain advantages from such alliances. The royal house strove to gain influence on the theocracy, and the Thebans secured royal blood for their dynasty, whose only claim to legitimacy up to that time was based on force.

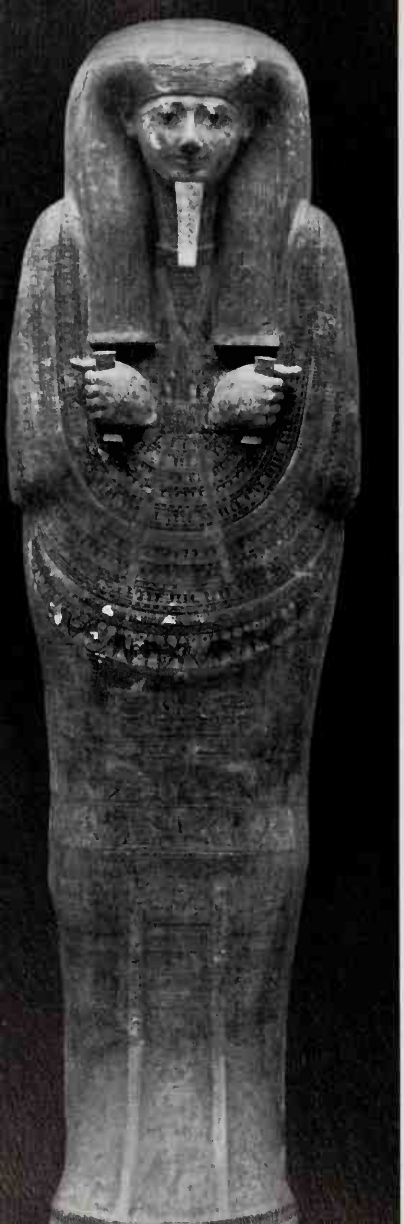
Statuette of the god Amon. Gold, height $7^1/_8$". Third Intermediate period, Twenty-Second Dynasty, c. 900 B.C. Allegedly from Karnak or Coptos (dealer's statements). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (The Carnavon Collection, 1926, Edward G. Harkness Bequest)



Queen Karomama. Bronze inlaid with gold, silver, and electrum, height 23¼". Third Intermediate period, Twenty-Second Dynasty, c. 830 B.C. The Louvre, Paris

The bronze figure of Queen Karomama, the consort of Takelot II, is a worthy counterpart to the gold statuette of Amon. This statue also bears witness to the mastery of the art of metalworking, which reached its apogee during this period. The charming figure of the queen recalls the "soft style" of the New Kingdom. Over the pleated gown she wears a necklace and a dress with hanging sleeves wrapped about her body. The queen is probably playing the role of a winged goddess, perhaps Isis, in the ritual of worship, as may be inferred from the position of her hands, which probably originally held sistra (ritual rattles). Inlays make the broad necklace especially splendid: wires of gold, silver, and electrum (an amber-colored alloy of gold and silver) have been laid in chased grooves and then hammered into place.

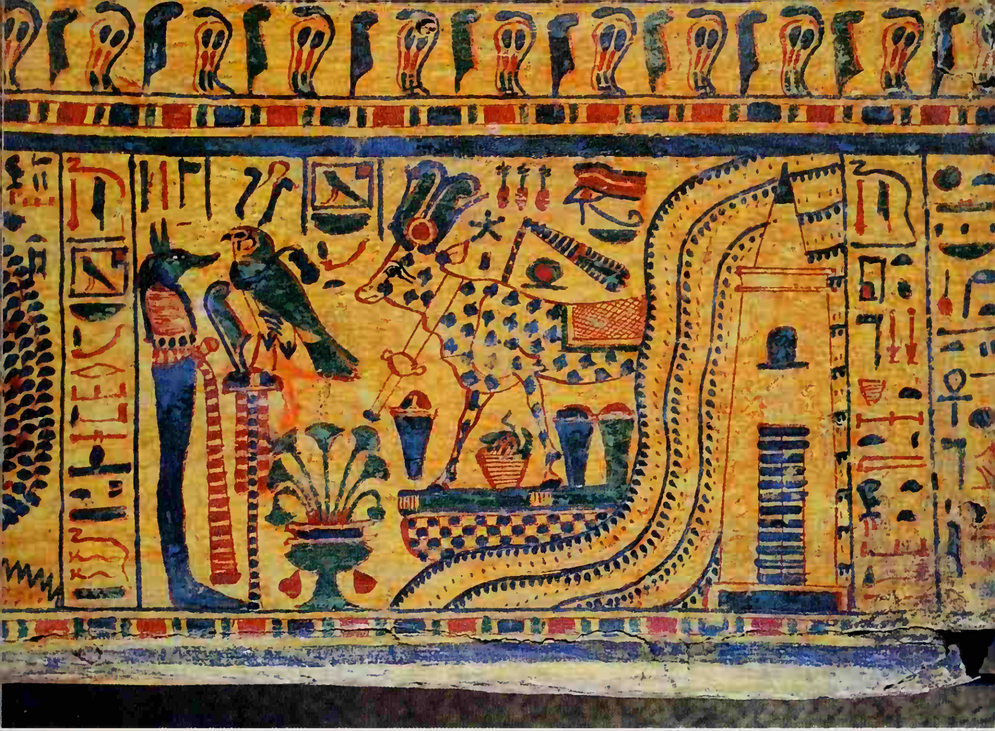
Karomama and Takelot bear non-Egyptian names, like the other sovereigns of this dynasty; for the Twenty-Second Dynasty was founded by a descendant of former commanders of Libyan mercenaries. These officers, originally tribal chiefs, managed to increase their military influence by acquiring additional princely and priestly titles, until they controlled Middle and Lower Egypt and dared to reach for the crown of the Pharaohs. The first ruler of this Libyan dynasty, who resided at Bubastis and was totally Egyptian in appearance, was Sheshonq I, the despoiler of Jerusalem. There were also connections with the Theban theocracy through the office of the "Consort of the God," who was given to King Amon in symbolic marriage. This role which, in spite of its religious form, was a purely political move, was assumed by a princess of the royal house.



The idea that the deceased becomes Osiris took physical form in the mummy-shaped coffins of the New Kingdom. Amenope wears the long wig and beard of the god of the dead, and, like the latter, his hands are crossed over his chest (although, instead of the scourge and scepter, the dead man here holds two documents, which confirm that he is the heir of the god Geb, the father of Osiris). A gold pectoral hangs from his neck, and the low-hanging necklace ends in a garland of flowers.

The coffin is covered, in fact overloaded, with representations of belief in the afterlife: the central motif of each register is the sun rising in the sky. The dead man appears before gods, goddesses, and demons, to offer them sacrifices. Symbols of resurrection, which promise the deceased that he will reappear like the sun, are strewn over the entire surface: sun-eyes, symbols of life, scepters, and pillars. In the shape of a soul-bird (a bird with a human head) the dead man is enabled to rise up to the sky like the winged sun-disk.

Coffin of Amenope's mummy. Wood coated with stucco and painted, height c. 67″. Third Intermediate period, Twenty-First Dynasty, c. 1050 B.C. From Thebes. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

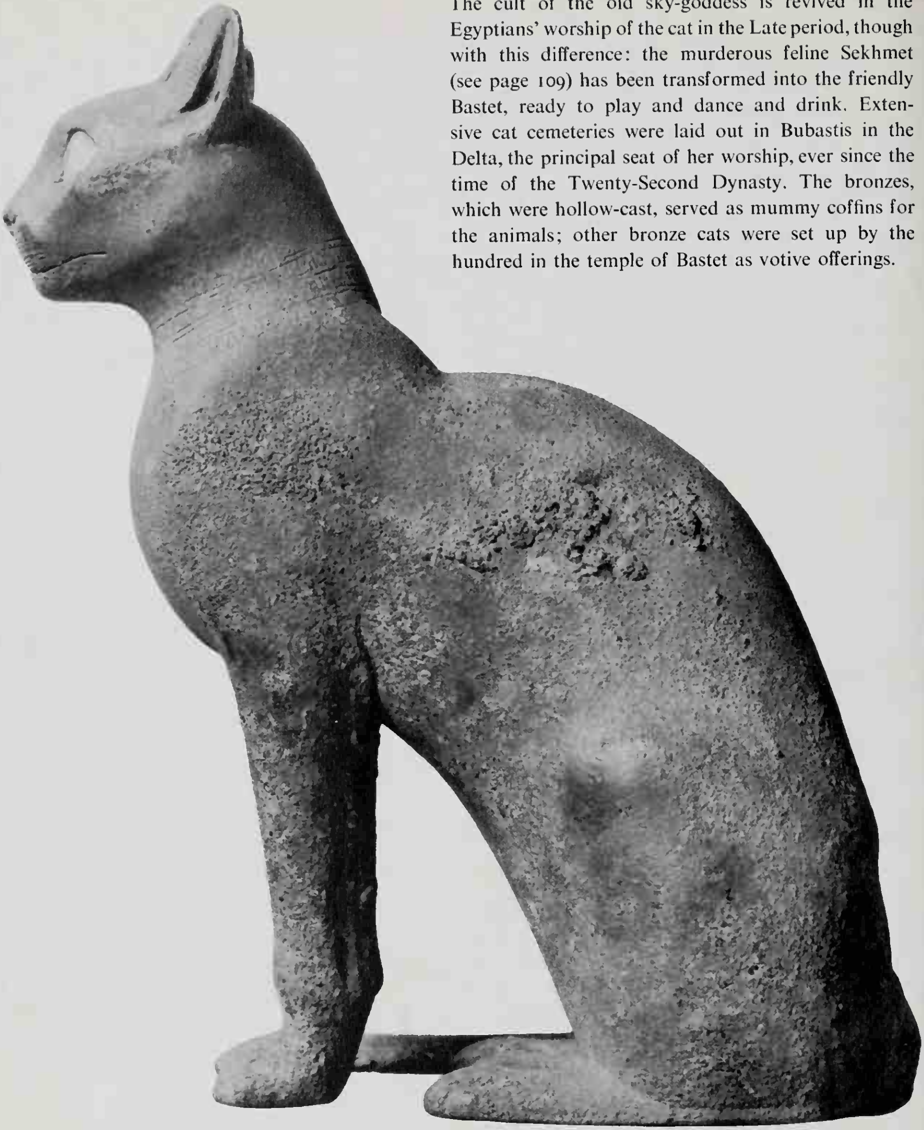


Coffin of Khons-mose. Painted wood, length of the coffin 75½″, height of the detail c. 10″. Third Intermediate period, Twenty-First Dynasty, c. 1080–1000 B.C. From Thebes. Victoria Museum, Uppsala

The Western Mountain of Thebes, from which the goddess Hathor emerges in the shape of the sky-cow, is depicted beneath a frieze of uraeus snakes and *maat* feathers (symbols of the orderly travel of the sun through the sky). She is looking toward the east, awaiting the sun-god, who returns to her at evening.

As the sun enters the Western Mountain for rejuvenation (cf. page 142), so does the dead man wish to experience an analogous rejuvenation by being buried there. The entrance to his tomb in the steep mountain is shown next to the sky-goddess. In front of the sky-cow, the standard of the west is set up, in front of which there stands one of the Horus sons, who is designated in the inscription here as the "Great God," though he is identifiable as Duamutef by his jackal's head. This name signifies "He Who Reveres His Mother" and refers here to the return of the son to his mother's embrace.

The cult of the old sky-goddess is revived in the Egyptians' worship of the cat in the Late period, though with this difference: the murderous feline Sekhmet (see page 109) has been transformed into the friendly Bastet, ready to play and dance and drink. Extensive cat cemeteries were laid out in Bubastis in the Delta, the principal seat of her worship, ever since the time of the Twenty-Second Dynasty. The bronzes, which were hollow-cast, served as mummy coffins for the animals; other bronze cats were set up by the hundred in the temple of Bastet as votive offerings.

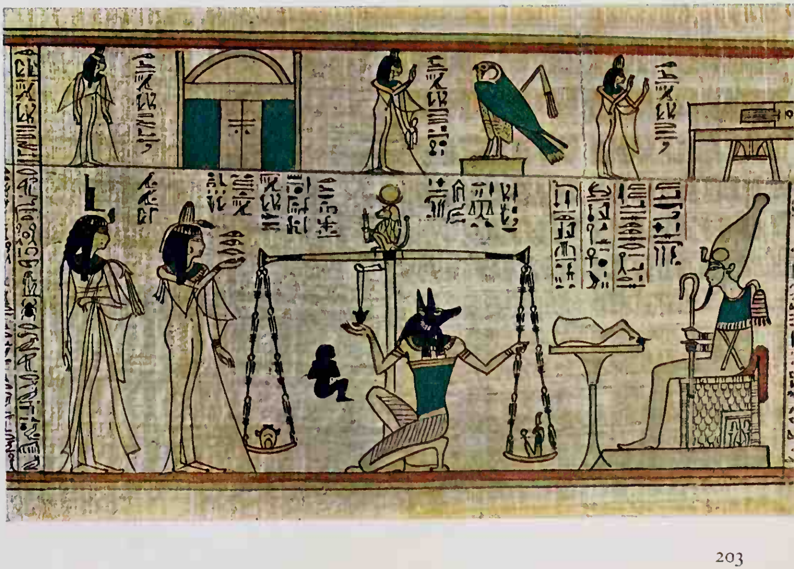


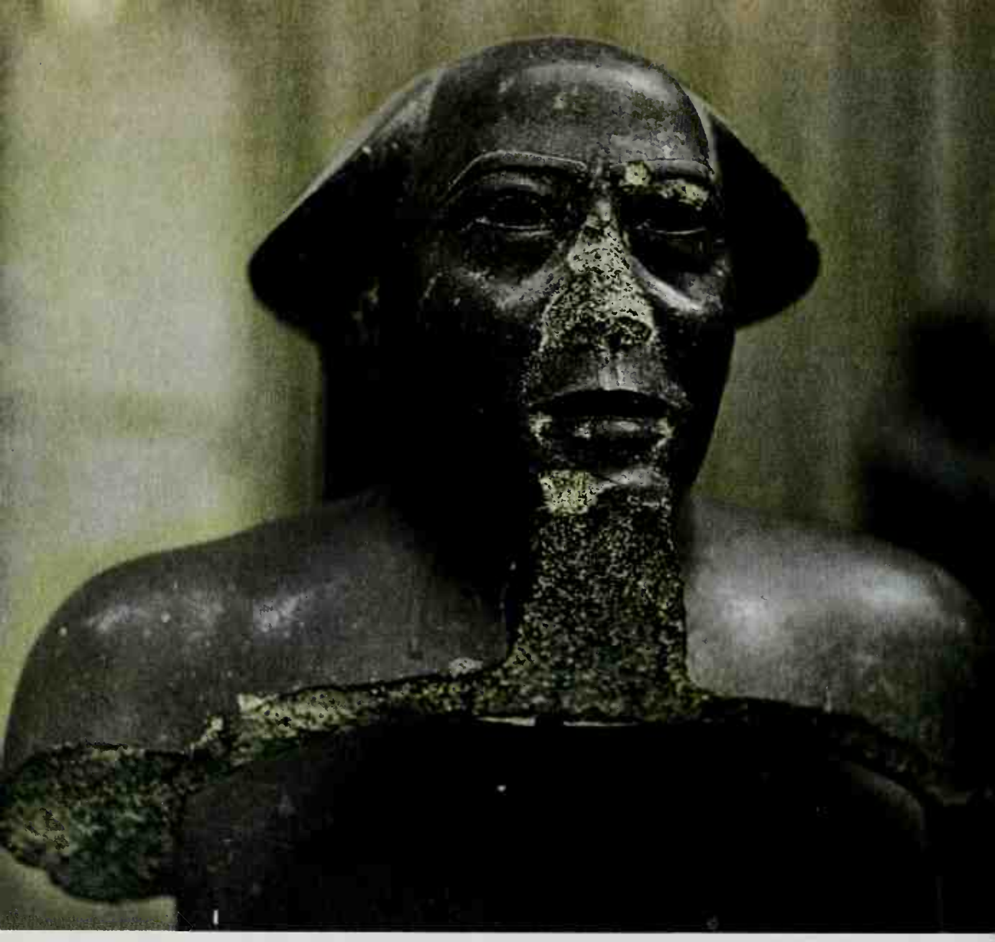
Accompanied by "Isis, Mother of the God" (at the left), the dead woman faces the scales of the court of the dead. In the left pan of the balance lies her heart, which is being weighed against a figure of Maat, the goddess of order, truth, and justice. Anubis checks the position of the scales; Thoth, the divine scribe, crouches on the balance and records the result. Osiris, the god of the dead, proclaims the verdict: "Give her her eyes and her mouth [i.e., perform the resuscitation rites of opening the mouth and eyes (cf. page 125)], for her heart has passed the test."

The ancient Egyptian court of the dead proclaims the idea that it is upright sentiments and a mode of life in accordance with the divine order that guarantee entry into the hereafter, rather than the furnishings of the tomb made possible by rank, repute, and riches.

◀ Sacred cat, the animal of the goddess Bastet. Bronze with eyes inlaid as convex plates of gold, height $8^{1}/_{4}$". Late period, Twenty-Fifth–Twenty-Sixth Dynasties, seventh–sixth centuries B.C. State Museums, Berlin (West)

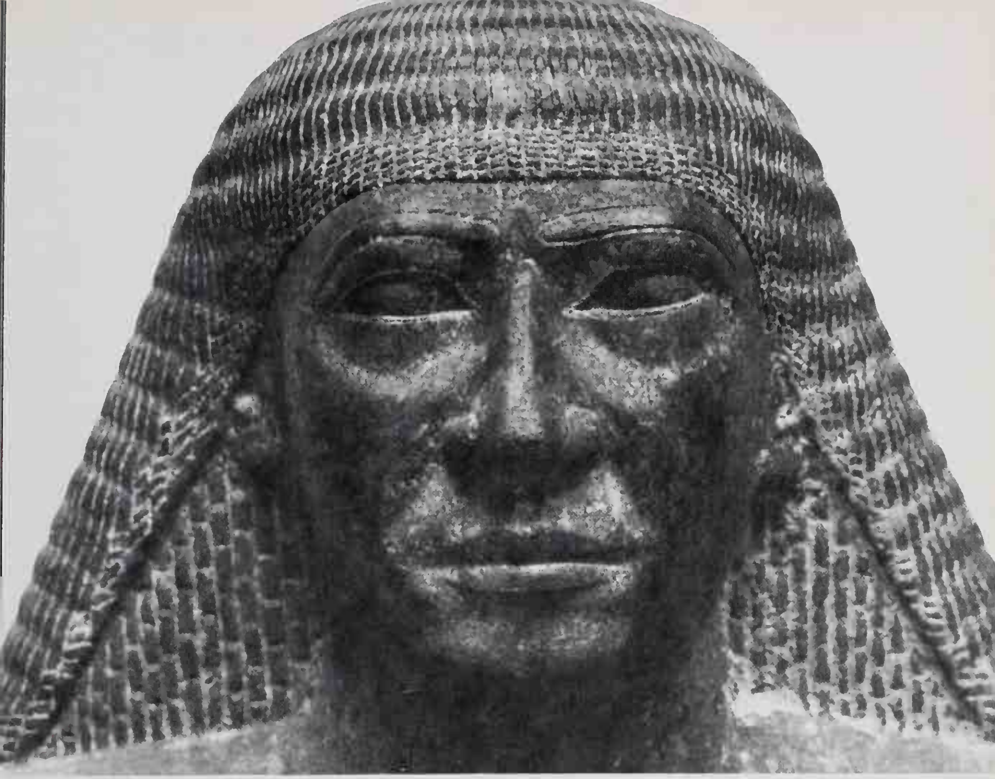
The court of the dead, detail of the "Book of the Dead" of Naun, one of the female musicians of Amon-Ra. Papyrus. Third Intermediate period, Twenty-First Dynasty, c. 1000 B.C. From Deir el Bahari. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York





Head of a priest, probably Mentuemhat, the viceroy of the Thebaid. Granite, height 18″. Late period, Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, c. 690–660 B.C. From Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Mentuemhat, who came from a family of Theban priests, was viceroy of the Thebaid under the Ethiopian King Taharqa. Here he seems to wish to imitate the features of his sovereign, for the face of this man is not entirely Egyptian, though it is not Negroid either. The high cheekbones, the thick lips, and the deep creases give the face a highly personal expression. The trend toward realism is just as characteristic of the Ethiopian period as is the penchant for copying the great models of past ages.



Head of a statue of Mentuemhat. Granite, height of the statue 53″, height of the detail c. 8½″. Late period, Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, c. 690–660 B.C. From Karnak (Thebes). Egyptian Museum, Cairo

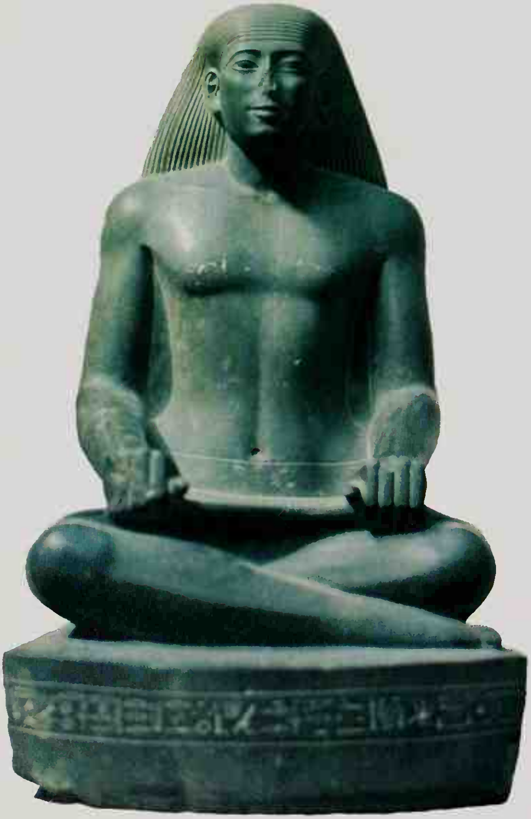
The Ethiopian successors of the princes of Napata had seized the Thebaid in 750 B.C. and, under Piankhy, had conquered the whole of Egypt. However, it was not as hostile foreigners that they came to Egypt, but (like the Libyans before them) as a thoroughly Egyptianized people. During the colonial era, the inhabitants of Nubia had adopted Egyptian customs, and in particular, the worship of Amon. Now they became more Egyptian and more orthodox than the Egyptians themselves, enlarging and restoring the temples and letting the glories of bygone eras blaze forth anew. The theocracy of Amon remained unaltered, the only change being that the office of "Consort of the God" (see page 199) was now occupied by an Ethiopian princess.

Among the numerous statues of Mentuemhat, there are some that exhibit archaizing tendencies. Though they followed the style of the Old Kingdom, certain discrepancies clearly show that the sculptures of the Ethiopian period are by no means slavish imitations, but rather independent and unmistakable achievements in their own right.

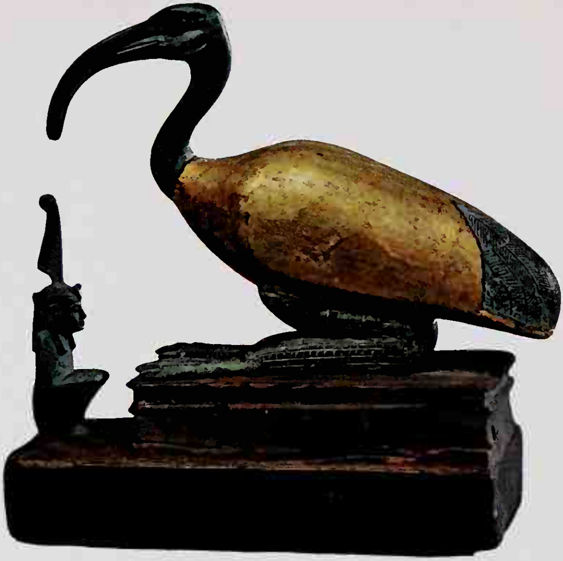
The Assyrian attack under Esar-haddon occurred in the period of Ethiopian rule (the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty); under Esar-haddon's onslaught, the unity of the two lands, which had been maintained with great difficulty by the Ethiopians, collapsed. Once again, a Lower Egyptian principality was established under Libyan dominion, with the approval of the Assyrians. By shrewd diplomacy, Psammetichus, the Prince of Saïs, finally extended his rule to Upper Egypt (he had his daughter adopted as the successor of the Ethiopian princess in the office of the "Consort of the God" of Thebes), so that the kingdom of the Pharaohs was able to experience another flowering in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, known as the Saïte period.

The desire to secure the newly established order by imitating the great ages of Egyptian history, which we have already found in the time of the Ethiopians, led to a renaissance in all fields, including, for example, the reintroduction of the most ancient titles. In art, this archaizing tendency was expressed in the return to motifs and styles of the Old Kingdom. But though the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty was able to adapt these ancient forms to its own time, we see that the works of the Saïte period, despite their masterful workmanship, did not derive from a direct confrontation with life, but were rather servile, though extremely successful, imitations of a distant ideal.

Compared with the Old Kingdom scribe (page 54), an almost tangible coldness emanates from the statue of Nespekashuti, in which every impulse of warm life is frozen into mere form.



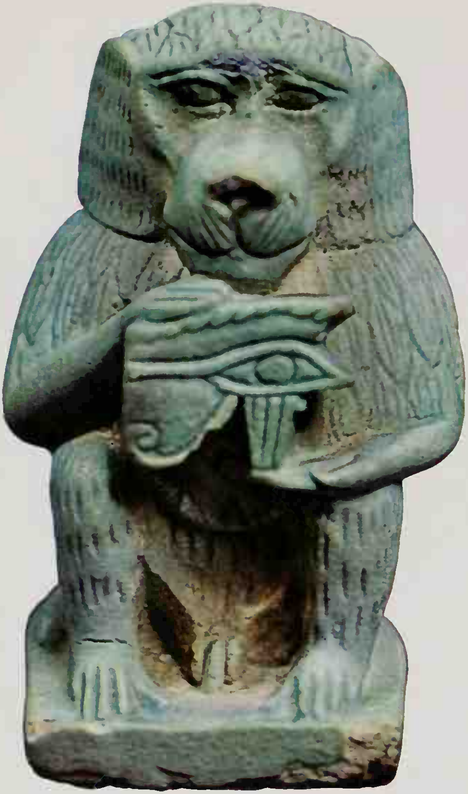
The "Prince and Count" Nespekashuti as a scribe. Granite, height 31½". Late period, Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (Saïte period), c. 650 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



The goddess Maat facing the god Thoth. Bronze, gilded wood (body of the bird), and wood (base); length of the base 8″, height (including base) 7$^{3}/_{4}$″. Late period, Twenty-Sixth Dynasty or later, probably fourth century B.C. From Tuna el Gebel (Hermopolis). Kestner Museum, Hanover

Hermopolis was the principal seat of the worship of Thoth, who could appear as a baboon or as an ibis, and thus probably combined in himself two gods having analogous functions. We have already encountered this god as the lord of scribes and writing (page 172), as well as in the form of the scribe at the court of the dead (page 203). The Egyptians owed the art of writing to him: he had created the "Words of God" of the ancient sacred scriptures, which governed worship of the gods; he wrote the magical books; and he is the "Lord of the Laws." Thus, Thoth is a keeper of the order based on written ordinances both on earth and (in his capacity as deputy and scribe of Ra, the lord of the Universe) in heaven. This is probably why he faces the goddess Maat, who is likewise responsible for law, justice, and truth (see page 203). Thoth and Maat together regulate the course of the stars and contribute to the maintenance of the divine order on earth.

Despite its unmistakable signs of mass production, the execution of this work, whose theme is frequently encountered in the Late period, is not devoid of quality. Particularly impressive is the head of the majestic bird, set on a powerful neck, with its inlaid eyes of black glass paste and its beak bent down toward the goddess Maat.



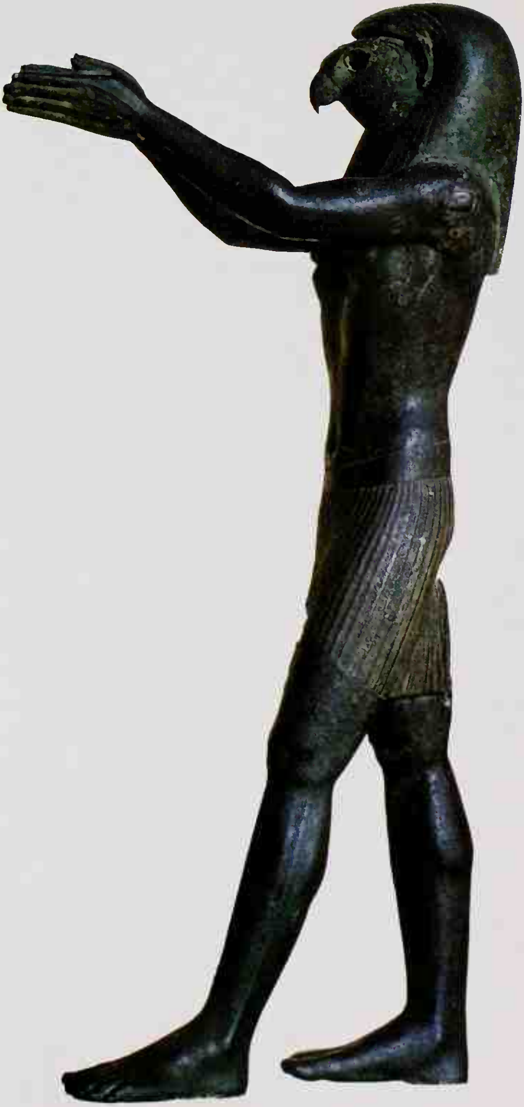
Thoth as keeper of the eye of light. Faïence, height c. 2″. Late period, Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, seventh–sixth centuries B.C. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

One of the many functions of the god Thoth is that of god of the moon. He is the deputy of the sun-god and illuminates the earth when Ra dwells in the underworld. Yet Thoth's links with the sun are more substantial: in his capacity as protector of order in heaven and on earth, Thoth always appears whenever trouble develops, whether it be the daily setting of the sun, or the shift of the sun's orbit to the south in winter, or the dwindling of the full moon's disk. The myth then relates how Thoth, as a physician, heals the Eye of Light or brings home the angry sky-goddess, together with her light.

On behalf of the gods and as their representative, the king must maintain order on earth. He endeavors to influence the rising of the Nile or the return of the sun and the moon by ritual acts. The Late Egyptian royal tombs contain representations of the king as the keeper of the eye of light, playing the same role as the god Thoth. Because of this identity of content (and based on a phonetic parallel) the group "baboon-brings-the-eye-of-light" could be employed as the spelling for the word "king" in the cryptographic writing of the Ptolemaic period.

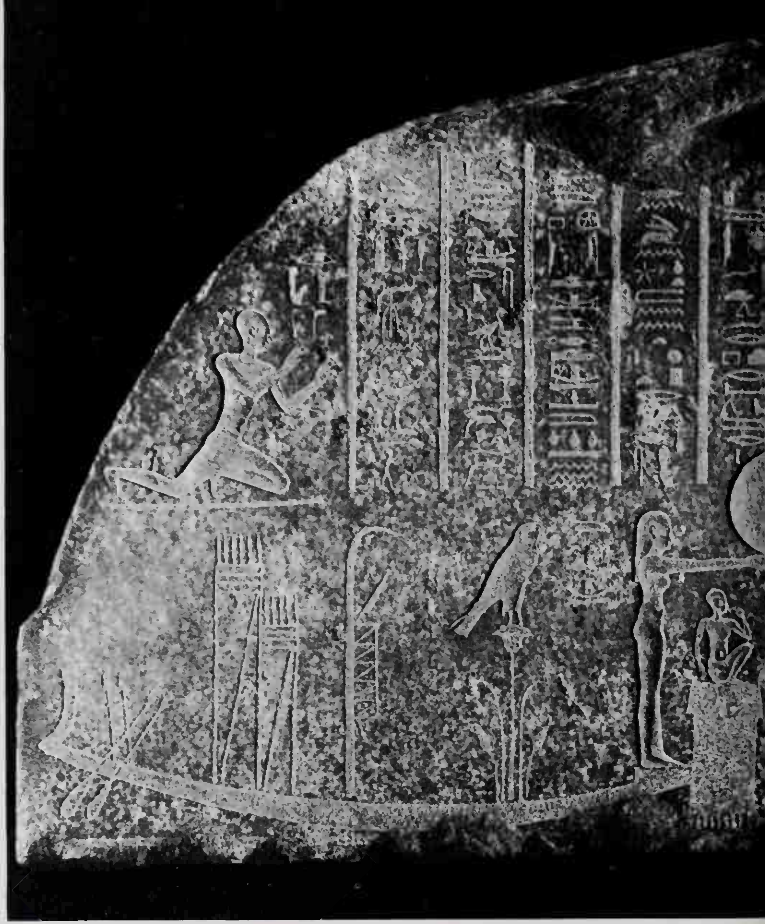
Though this figure was mass produced, the little monkey has all the essential features of his species, in addition to a certain crafty dignity, which is expressly attributed to Thoth in a late myth that describes how the angry goddess was brought home. The figure may have been used as a votive offering or more probably as an amulet.

The god Horus. Bronze, height $37^3/_4$". Late period, Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, c. 600 B.C.



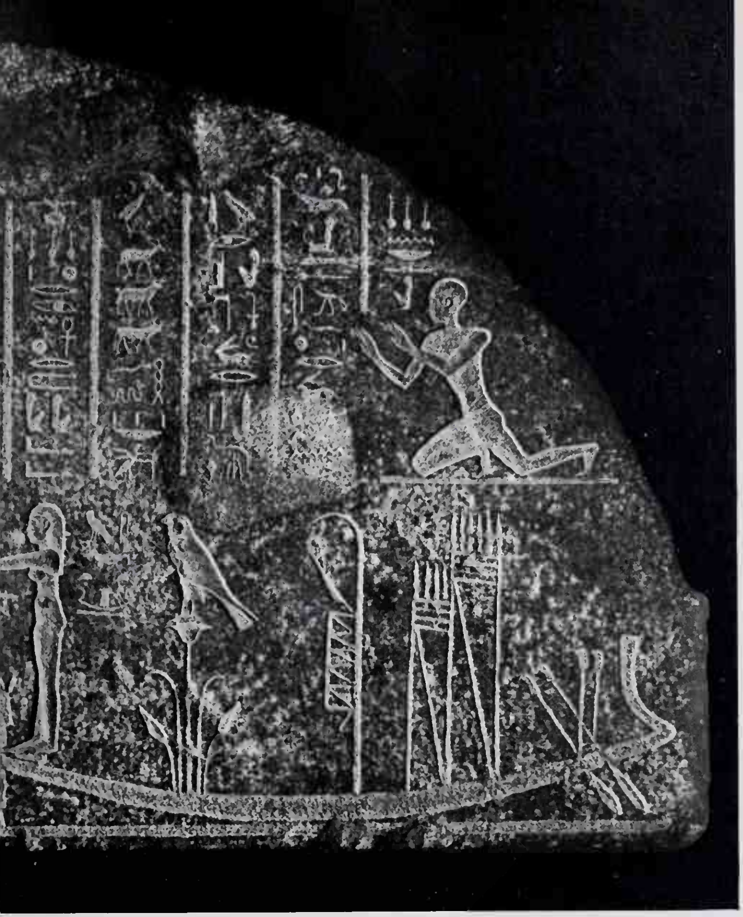
In the hybrid form of a man and an animal, which had become standardized for many Egyptian deities since the beginnings of the historical period (cf. page 214), the hawk-headed Horus with arms uplifted faces the king (not shown here) to pour purifying water over him from vessels which the god held in his hands. If the entire group had been preserved, Seth or Thoth would have joined him as another god, to perform with Horus the purification ceremonies for the king.

This ritual purification of the king, who stands between two gods and receives the jets of water from their uplifted hands, is known in many reliefs and sculptured groups. As in baptism, the purifying water served as a symbol that all evil had been removed from the earthly king, so that he might be able to come before the gods in ritual purity and perform divine service. Such purification had to be performed upon entrance into the afterlife, before the dead man could appear before his judges.



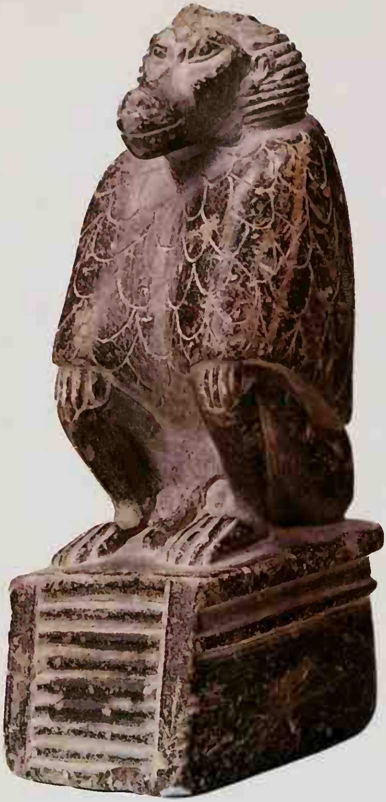
Transferring the sun-disk from the morning barge to the evening barge, on the narrow side of the cover of the priest Djed-Hor's sarcophagus. Gray granite, width 43". Late period, sixth century B.C. or later. The Louvre, Paris

Many notions were developed and retained alongside one another to explain the travel of the sun through the sky. Besides the image of the sun-disk, which either flies or is borne by a celestial animal, travel in barges was a very popular subject. Just as the complete cycle is always divided into the two phases of day and night, or rising and setting (with these two phases assigned to the gods Ra and Osiris, respectively, cf. pages 188, 189),



the sun's barge is split into a morning barge and an evening barge, the former taking care of the voyage during the day, and the latter the voyage during the night. The change at the horizons, the meeting point of day and night, is effected by transferring the sun-disk from one ship to the other. The day ship, which is identified by the morning sun, seated as a child at the prow, as well as by its hieroglyphic inscription, is at the left (in the east). The goddess of the east hands the sun over to the goddess of the west standing in the evening barge.

The inclusion of the dead man, who is shown kneeling over each barge, in this eternal cycle of the sun between day and night, is the core of the ancient Egyptian hope of an afterlife. This desire is expressed by the double portrayal of the dead man, his assignment to both phases of eternity.



The god Thoth as a baboon. Serpentine, height $5^1/_4$". Late period, sixth century B.C. Kestner Museum, Hanover

The sacred baboon, one of the manifestations of the god Thoth, squats on a chestlike support in the posture that had become conventionalized long before. (Narmer's monkey [page 23] did not at that time lay his hands on his knees, but let his arms hang down between his legs.)

This baboon may have been part of a group that showed a scribe seated before his patron-god, and may have been used as a votive offering. In addition to such offerings, it was customary for scribes to pour a few drops of water out of the water cup of the writing case as a libation to Thoth before beginning to write.

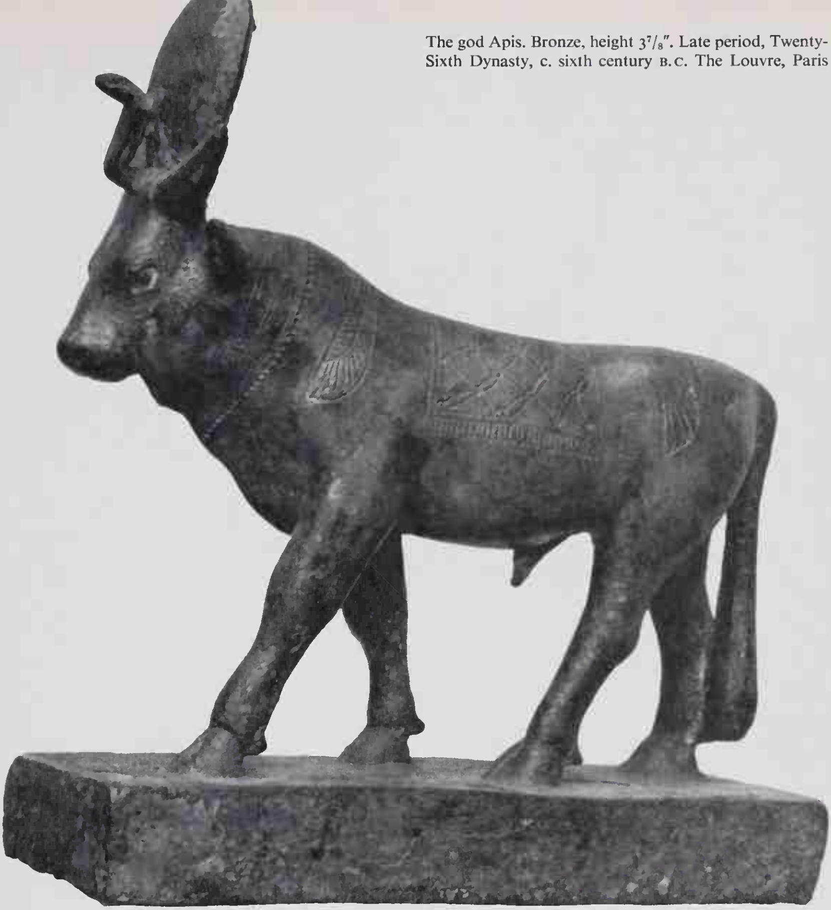
Yet, the nature of this many-sided god is far from completely described when he is called the "Lord of Writing," the "Sanctuary of Wisdom," and the "Keeper of Science" (see page 207). There are close and evidently ancient links between Thoth and the cosmos: he is the vizier and deputy of the sun-god; he relieves the golden disk of day and shines through the night as the silvery moon. Other, analogous representations of the squatting baboon have the god wearing the moon symbol on his head, in the combined form of the full moon and the crescent. The baboon sometimes wears a pectoral suspended from its neck, on which the sky-barge is shown with the sun-disk. As the reckoner of time, Thoth is also responsible for the orderly course of the sun (cf. page 208).

As the keeper of writings and information, Thoth becomes the gods' messenger; it is he who tells the queen that it has pleased Amon-Ra, the god of the sky, to choose her as his consort and that she will present the country with a new divine king; he participates in the court of the dead (see page 203) as the scribe; the path of the dead to Osiris passes through Thoth.

The Greeks recognized their Hermes in this busy deity, with the result that Thoth's principal seat of worship was called Hermopolis.

The worship of sacred animals, which flourished exuberantly in the Late period, involved particularly the sacred bull of Memphis, which had been known from early times by the name of Apis. The oldest sources indicate that he is a fertility-god. Links with the sun-god are found, dating from the New Kingdom. In the Late period, the Apis-bull wears the sun-disk between his horns, a winged sun-disk and the sky-vulture on his back, and a caparison.

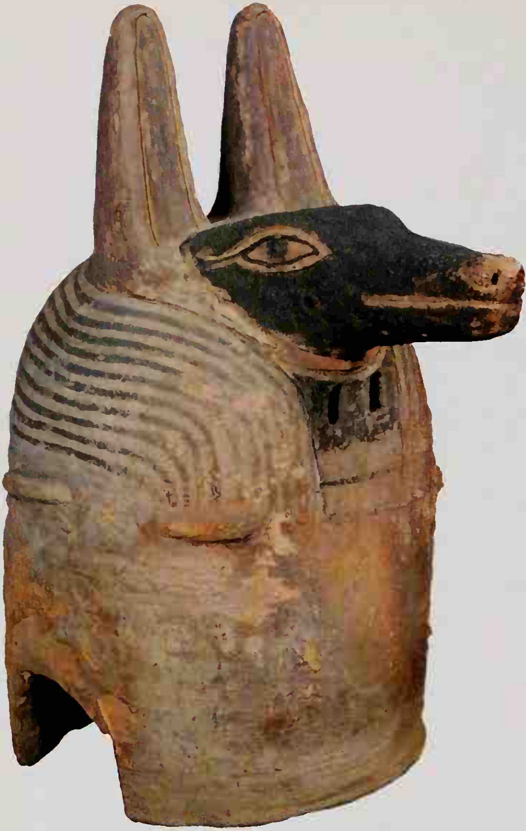
It would seem that two ancient notions have fused together in this sky- or sun-bull: the sky-cow as the bearer of the sun-disk and the sun itself, which could take on the shape of a young bull as the offspring of



The god Apis. Bronze, height $3^7/_8$". Late period, Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, c. sixth century B.C. The Louvre, Paris

this celestial deity. The close links between Apis and Osiris make it likely that the nocturnal components of the solar cycle have also settled on Apis. As a deity of the dead, Apis carries the mummy, as the celestial biers used to in the past (see page 147). The root of the Ptolemaic god Serapis is probably to be sought in the compound Osir[is]-Apis.

A sacred Apis-bull was selected according to special physical markings, principally a light triangle on its forehead, which our example also bears as a sign of its election. After they died, the sacred bulls were embalmed and interred in huge stone sarcophaguses in the Serapeum.



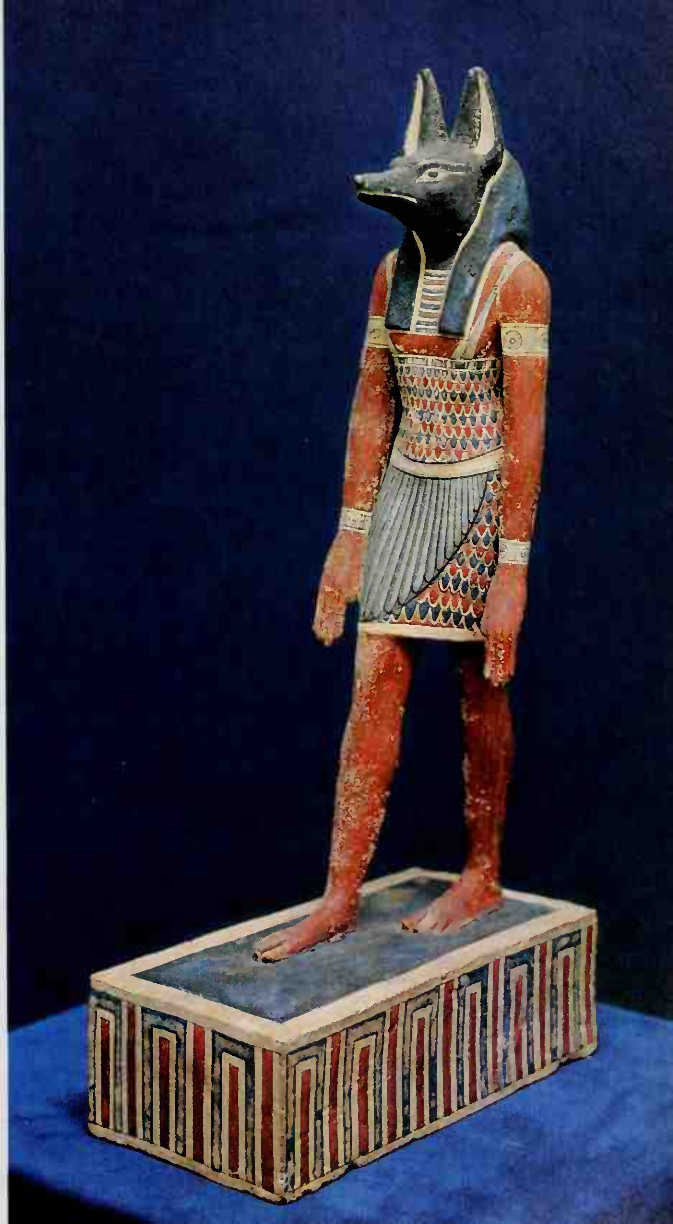
Anubis-mask for the priest of the dead. Burnt clay, height 19$^1/_2$". Late period. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim

Care for the mummy by the god Anubis (see page 189)—hoped for in the belief in a hereafter—was performed in the death cult by a priest who placed a mask of Anubis over his head and thus became the jackal-god. The priest could see and breathe through two holes in the mask. With the mask on his shoulders, there was no longer any difference between the priest and the hybrid god of the dead, Anubis. Strictly speaking, Anubis was a dog, as zoologists have proved to the Egyptologists, but the "jackal" that they have come to prefer is apparently ineradicable.

The hybrid figure of a god, with the body of a human and the head of an animal, is not confined to Anubis, but is to be found in other gods that used to exist in animal shapes (cf. page 209). This transformation of what once were animal-deities into hybrid figures is an impressive example of the procedure, followed everywhere by the Egyptians, of forming a new image out of a combination of new ideas and venerable traditions, rather than by adopting a radical change of form.

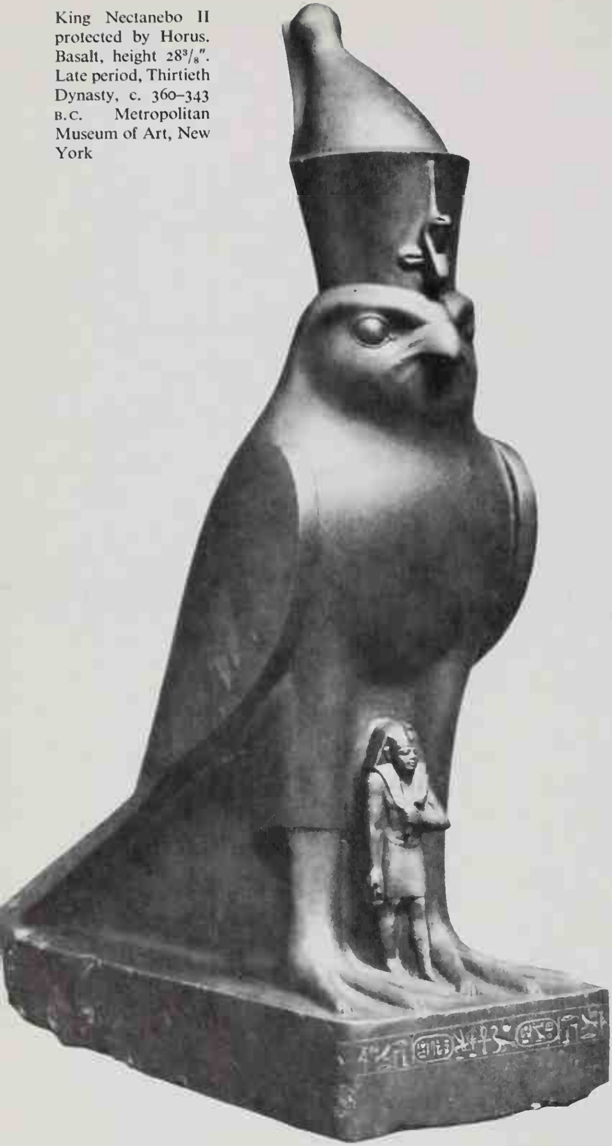
Once man had learned, soon after the unification of the kingdom, what achievements he was capable of in an orderly state, and began to become conscious of his extraordinary and singular position as a man, an animal no longer seemed, in many instances, to be an adequate manifestation of a deity. This therefore brought about the anthropomorphization of the gods. The ancient animal-deities were given human bodies, with which their most essential attributes were combined: animal heads, horns, hieroglyphic names. This phenomenon may conversely be called the "deification of man," for man had now become the standard of measurement and the model, and he refashioned the gods in his own image.

Anubis, god of the dead. Wood coated with stucco and painted, height 16⁷/₈". Late period, first half of first millennium B.C. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim



The god wears a stomacher with a feather pattern, supported by shoulder-straps, and a broad necklace and armbands as jewelry. The pedestal on which he stands depicts the painted façade of the tomb.

King Nectanebo II protected by Horus. Basalt, height $28^3/_8$". Late period, Thirtieth Dynasty, c. 360–343 B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

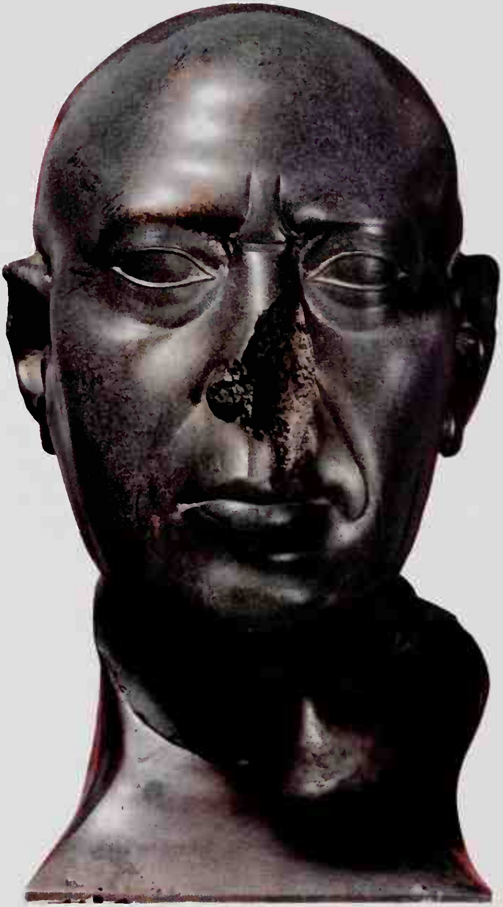


The Saïtes, including Apries, who is called Hophra in the Bible, could not maintain Egypt's claims in Palestine either against Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon or against the new Star of the East, Cyrus, King of Persia. On the contrary, after a disastrous battle at Pelusium, Cambyses turned the land of the Pharaohs into a satrapy of the Persian Empire (Twenty-Seventh Dynasty, 525–405 B.C.). Under native rulers, Egypt experienced one last period of flowering after the first Persian period, especially in the Thirtieth Dynasty (380–343 B.C.), before it finally fell into foreign hands as a result of a new Persian invasion (343 B.C.).

Nectanebo II, a king of the Thirtieth Dynasty, is now depicted as a tiny human being, in contrast to the towering Horus-hawk wearing the crown of the two kingdoms. The king was, indeed, from an early age a "son" of his celestial parents (as "Horus" he was a son of Hathor, goddess of the sky, and as "Son of Ra" he was subordinated to the sun-god), but a comparison with the sculptures on pages 40–41 or 59, where quite different solutions had been found for depicting the relationship between the Horus-hawk and the Pharaoh, shows how far apart the positions of god and king had evolved since the days of the Old Kingdom.

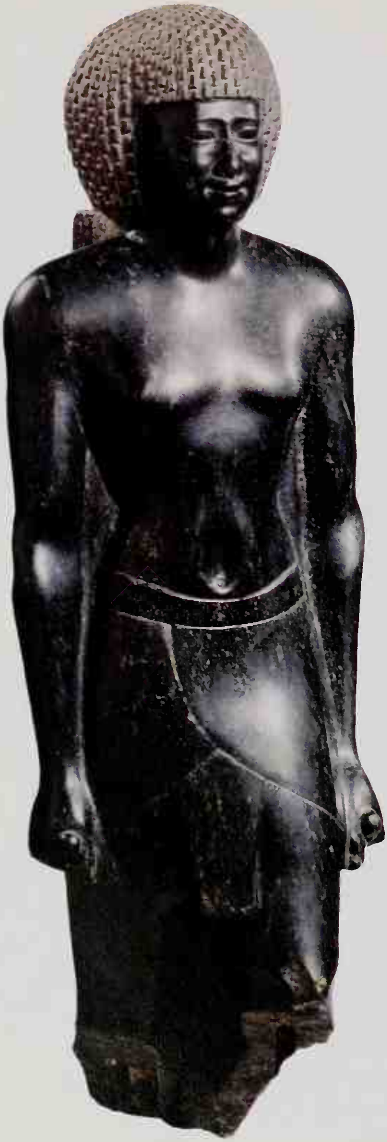
Along with the removal of the lord of the sky from availability to man, the king suffered a diminution of his divine power, until the god became the sovereign lord of man's fate, and man had nothing left but to accept his destiny humbly from the god's hand, without manipulations by ritual or magic. "As the king is no longer God in truth and in fact, God must rule himself" (Morenz).

The so-called "Green Head." Hard green stone, height $8^1/_2$". Late period, date disputed, varying from 530 B.C. to 35 B.C., probably fourth or fifth century B.C. Probably from Memphis. State Museums, Berlin (West)



Though the experts agree that the "Green Head" is the most perfect masterpiece of the Late period, in which Pharaonic art says farewell on a lonely peak of achievement, they cannot agree on the date of this work, which was probably once part of a priest's statue. The proposed dates extend from the time of the immediate successor of the so-called Mentuemhat (page 204) to that of Julius Caesar. What makes the judging of Late period works so difficult is the fact that we always have to reckon with returns to the styles of earlier eras. Two groups of styles exist side by side: archaizing works of art that follow the lines of older models and carry the mastery of empty forms to technical perfection, ignoring content; and portrait heads that are not indebted to any generalizing ideal form, but exhibit individual personalities executed realistically. It is tempting to draw a parallel between this uncanonical art and the phenomena of the dissolution of Late Egyptian society. Ever since the days of the much quoted "personal piety" of the Ramesside period, man has increasingly freed himself as an individual from the bonds of the state religion and has found his own relationship with his God. While the monarchy at least maintained the fiction and tried to preserve the old forms, the private individual was evidently able to give formal expression to the new situation and have himself portrayed as an individual. Once before, at the end of the Middle Kingdom, Egyptian sculpture had represented a similar individuality in deeply moving portraits of the human countenance (see pages 91, 95).

The fact that this head subtly reveals the finest anatomical details and yet is formed into an organic whole (that is, its component parts are inwardly subordinated to a central theme), the man's personality, is often cited as proof of a Hellenistic Greek or even Roman concept of form. Yet, Egyptian art always moved from an initially "hieroglyphic" style to organically structured works at the end of its great epochs (H. W. Müller). Thus the "Green Head" can be understood, from the principles of the development of Egyptian style, as an independent masterpiece in the chain of supreme, unmistakably Egyptian, achievements.



Statue of a priest in an archaizing style. Black diorite, height $20^1/_4$". Late period, Thirtieth Dynasty, c. 365 B.C. Probably from the Delta. Brooklyn Museum, New York

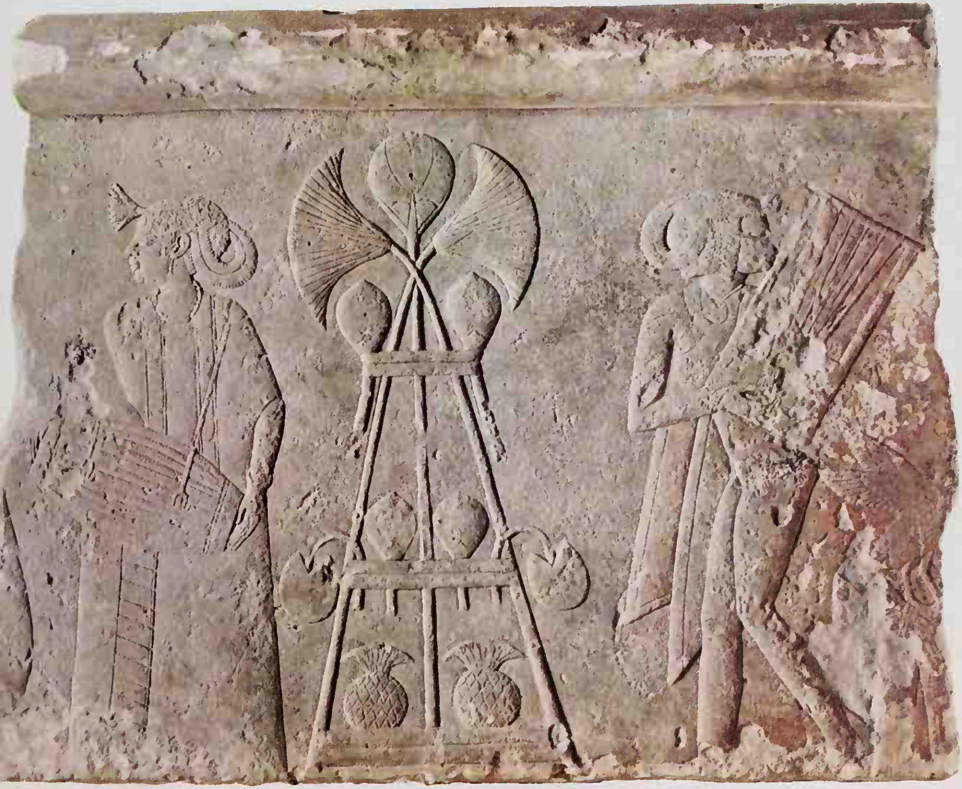
With the bodily shape, the posture, and the royal apron of the Old Kingdom (see page 47), a spherical coiffure of curls, which is certainly ancient, but which we have also encountered in the New Kingdom (see page 113), and lastly with a timelessly young face over which a light smile plays, this figure is an attempt, at the end of Pharaonic history, to make time stand still and to resurrect the great past of the Pharaohs by reusing its artistic forms. In carving this athletic, youthful body, the artist has achieved a masterpiece, though the face, with its idealizing features, does not proclaim the unbroken force of eternal youth as credibly as do the ancient models (see pages 40–41).

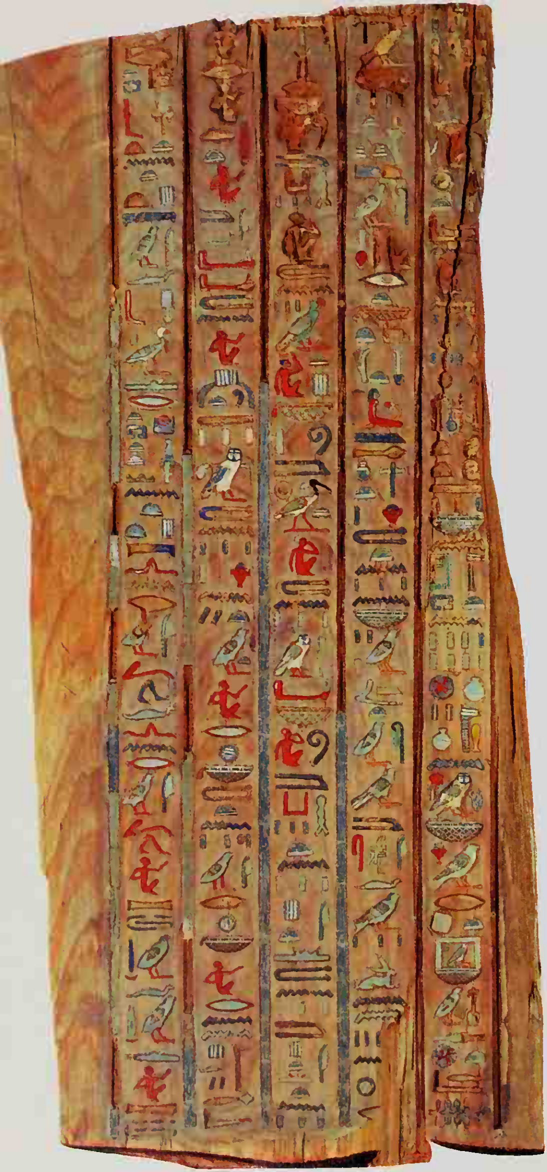
The end of the back support, on which name and title are engraved (in this instance the name has been lost), may be seen between the right shoulder and the head. This is, technically, a support for the freestanding statue. From the evolutionary standpoint it may well be the vestige of a back plate, which, in turn, seems to be closely related to the steles. The sole difference is that the figures, which were formerly done in relief, could later emerge sculpturally from the stele, which was, itself, a representation of the cosmos.

Woman drummer and woman playing the lyre, relief from the tomb of Hap-iu. Limestone, height $10^5/_8$". Late period, Thirtieth Dynasty, c. 360 B.C. Probably from Heliopolis or Memphis. Cleveland Museum of Art

The festive banquet of the Theban tombs in the New Kingdom (see pages 114–19) seems to have been the model for this archaizing picture. Before the lord of the tomb (missing at the left) there sat a harpist, whose bent back is just visible. He is followed by two ladies playing music, with a three-legged offering stand made of papyrus stems standing between them. As in the Eighteenth Dynasty, a lotus flower is worn on the forehead, and even the backward turn of the lady playing the lyre, which appears to be so un-Egyptian, has been found in Thebes (see page 116).

The picture, in fact, conveys a strange impression at first sight, and various attempts have been made to attribute this to Greek influences. The gowns, coiffures, and accessories are novel. Yet these are either new, though thoroughly Egyptian, fashions or (as in the case of the drummer) a borrowing from deepest Nubia. Nor are the figures of the musicians, which are plumper than those of the slim Theban women, a sufficient proof of Greek feelings for form; though it can not be denied that the Ptolemaic period, with its characteristic sculptural working of feminine forms, was near at hand.





Hieroglyphs had not yet lost their pictorial character, even in the Late period. As in the earliest beginnings of writing, each sign has a life of its own: birds wear their colored feathers, men's skins are dark, and plants are green. The hieroglyphs, made of colored glass paste, have been inlaid in chiseled recesses.

The inscription lists the name, titles, genealogy, and *curriculum vitae* of the deceased. This is followed by the text of Chapter 72 of the Book of the Dead. The dead man pleads with the "Lords of Truth," in other words, the judges in the hereafter. He bases his hope that his prayer will be answered on his knowledge of the names of those he addresses. The text finally speaks of the principal theme of belief in the hereafter: the sun's conquest of the horizons, and the linking of the dead man's destiny with that of the sun. What is interesting is the reversal of relationships, in that the man promises to intercede for the sun at the court of the dead. This interdependence is formulated in the refrain: "If he goes free, then I'll go free; if I go free, then he'll go free."

Fragment of the coffin of Djed-Djehuty-ef-ankh with inlaid hieroglyphs of colored glass paste. Sycamore wood, height 27⁵/₈". Late period, second half of fourth century B.C. From Tuna el Gebel (Hermopolis). Egyptian Museum, Turin

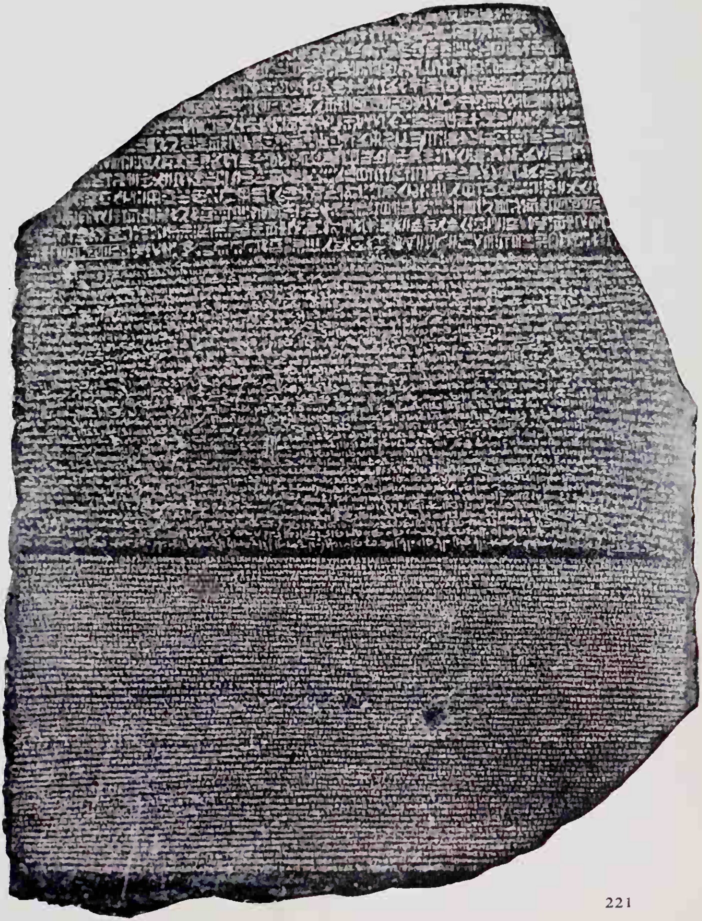
GRECO-ROMAN PERIOD

(332 B.C.–A.D. 395)

The Rosetta Stone is not a work of art, but its importance for the interpretation of ancient Egyptian works of art is incalculable. Its text is written in three parallel versions: Old Egyptian (hieroglyphs), demotic (colloquial speech), and Greek. Utilizing the Greek text and starting out with the names of King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, which were enclosed in elongated rings ("cartouches") in the hieroglyphic text, Jean François Champollion, a young French savant, succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphs in 1822. (After Egypt had been Christianized, these pagan "pictures" had fallen into oblivion.)

The trilingual inscription is a decree of the priests of Memphis for King Ptolemy V in 196 B.C., deliberately written in Egyptian and Greek in order to document the fact that Egyptians and Greeks were living together in peace and on a basis of equality.

The Ptolemies were the heirs of the Egyptian portion of the empire left behind by Alexander the Great. Alexander had come to Egypt in 332 as its liberator from Persian rule, putting an end to the Thirty-First Dynasty (the second Persian period). After his death, his general Ptolemy ruled for a short time as regent and then established his own dynasty, named for him. The Ptolemies, who were Macedonians, acted like Pharaohs, continuing the policy of the assimilation of Egyptians and Greeks begun by Alexander.

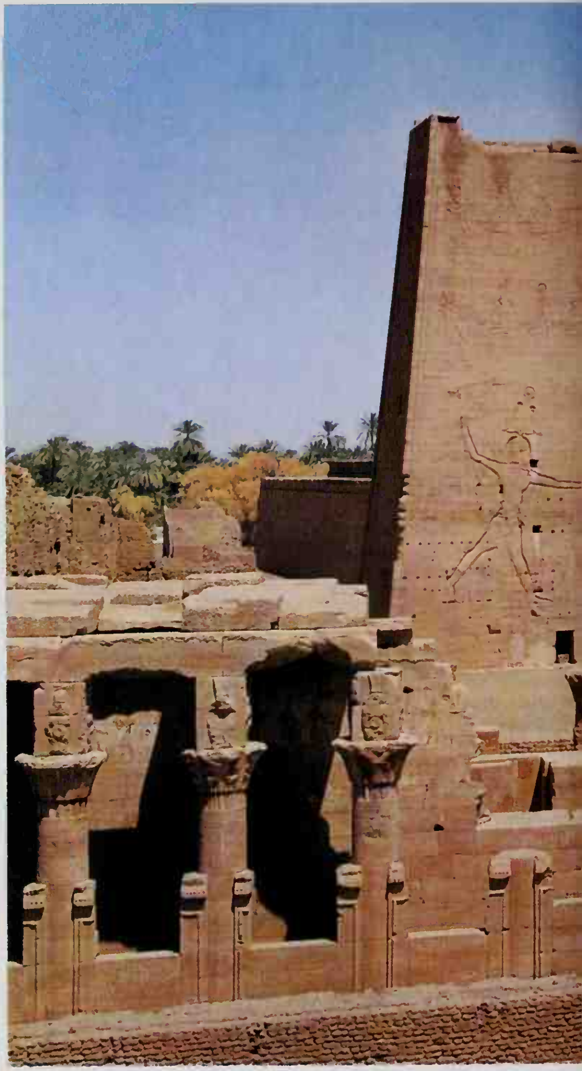


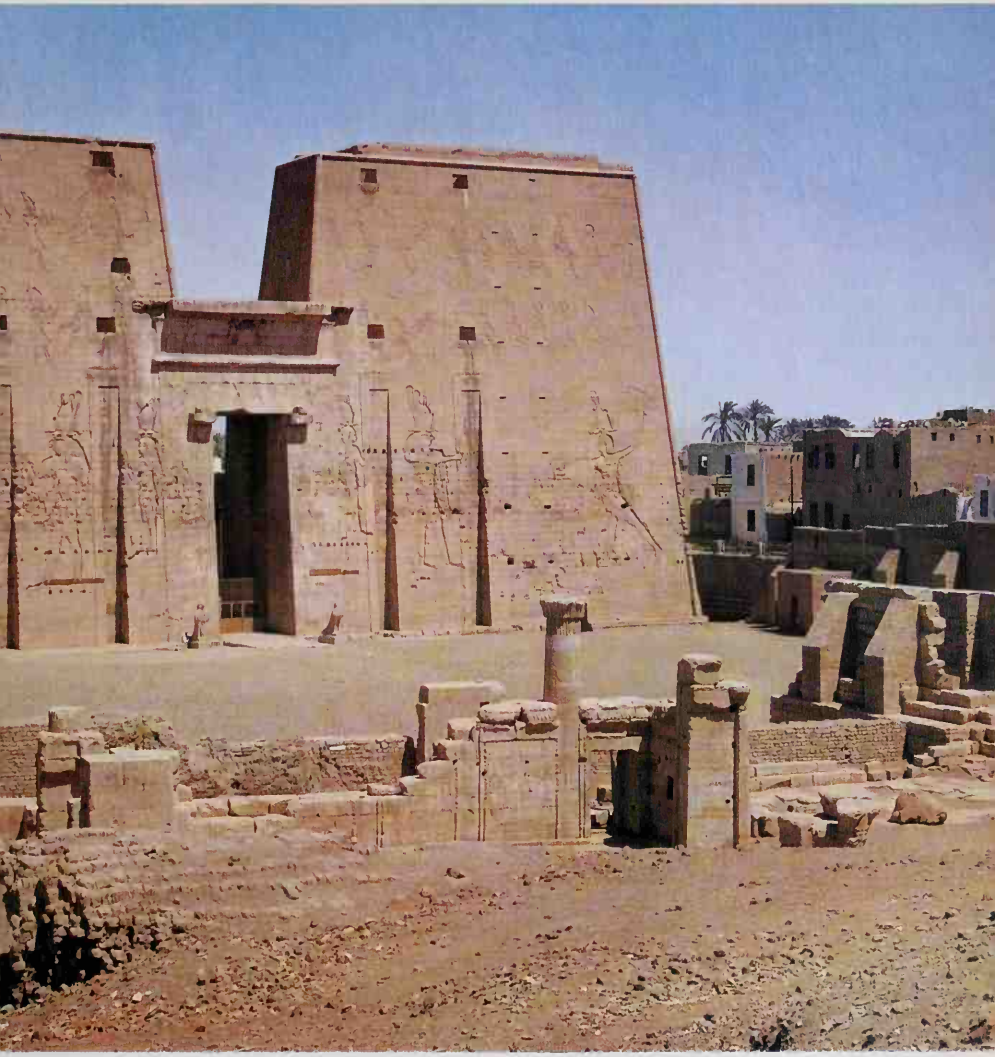
The Rosetta Stone. Black basalt, height c. 3′. Ptolemaic period, 196 B.C. British Museum, London

Like the Libyans, Ethiopians, and Persians before them, the Macedonian Ptolemies claimed to be the legitimate descendants of the Pharaohs. They had themselves portrayed in the costume of the Egyptian kings, they worshiped the country's gods, and they erected magnificent temples to them in the style of ancient Egypt (cf. pages 165, 194).

The temple at Edfu is dedicated to Horus, who was worshiped here together with Hathor of Denderah and their son Harsomtus ("Horus, the Uniter of the Two Countries"). The young Harsomtus, however, is equated with the King of Egypt. The assertion that he has two divine parents (whereas in the past one partner in the "sacred marriage" belonged to the royal house) appears to be related to the vanished divinity of the monarchy. Evidently the royal house was no longer a fitting partner for marriage with the gods, so the latter themselves provided the future kings of Egypt (cf. page 216).

The conception, birth, and upbringing of the divine child were celebrated ritually in the "birth house" (*Mammisi* in Coptic), visible at the front left in the photograph, as is indicated by the wall reliefs. Set aside from the main building (for birth and lying-in were subject to ritual prohibitions), the birth house is a stone imitation of a garden bower built of plants, in the form of a peripteral temple. The god Bes, the patron of lying-in (see page 186), is to be seen above the capitals of the plantlike columns.





The temple of Horus at Edfu. Sandstone, height of the pylon 106′, width 207′. Ptolemaic period, built 237–57 B.C.

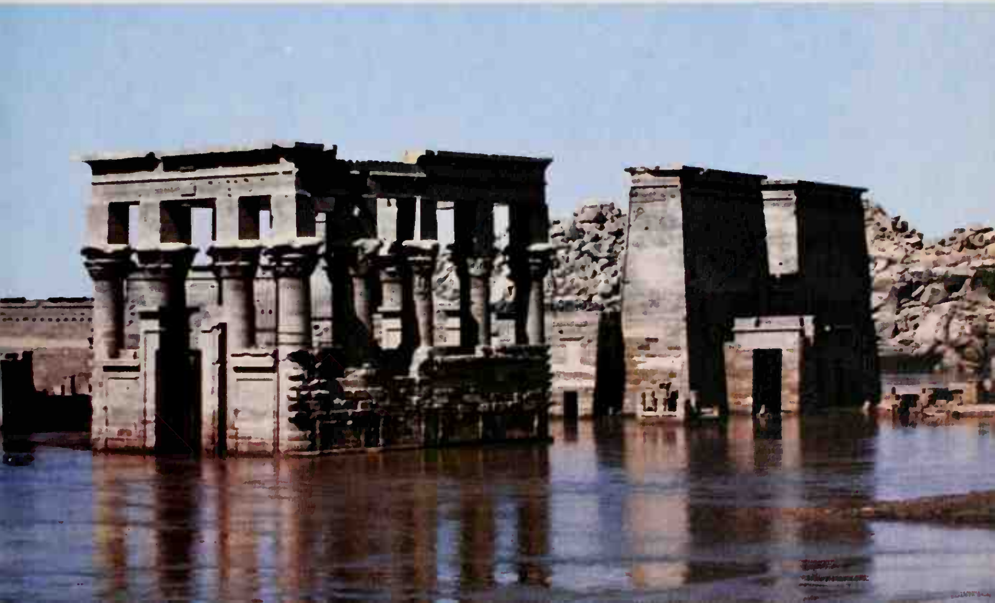
◀ As they had done from time immemorial, the old Egyptian gods Nephthys, mistress of the sky, and Anubis, god of the dead, are seated in front of the king, promising him strength and eternal life. (Since the Ptolemies had themselves depicted as Egyptians, they enjoy the protection of the Pharaonic gods.) Despite the retention of old motifs, the style of this period's royal works is unmistakable: it is the female figures above all—the goddesses and queens—who display a changed feeling for form in a new sculptural modeling of their bodies, especially of the breast.

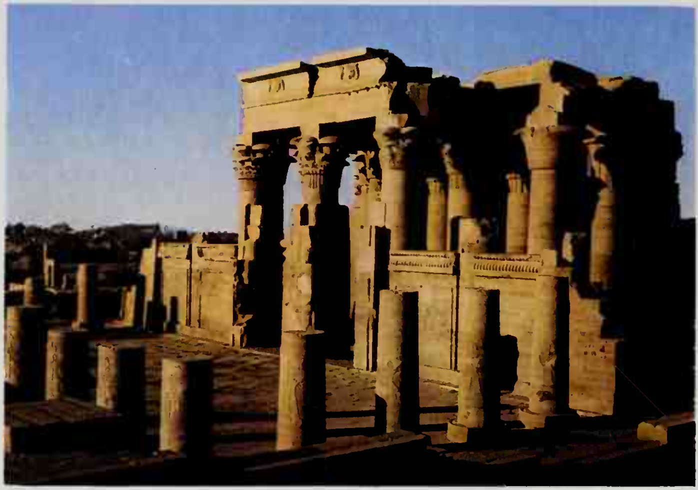
The Aswan Dam submerged the temple of Isis on Philae Island. The new High Dam, which is situated below Philae and has drowned numerous temples in Nubia (see page 168) is giving the "Jewel of Egypt" a sort of renaissance, which lets us hope that this principal seat of Isis worship in the south of the country may be preserved. Here is where the "Great Mother of God," the consort of Osiris and mother of Horus, was worshiped by Nubians and Blemmyes, by Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. (Her temple was closed by Justinian in the sixth century A.D.)

Past Trojan's balcony we see the temple and its classical pylon standing in the water of the reservoir (the main pylon can be seen at the left edge of the photograph). The balcony, which was never completed, fascinates by its balanced structural design and by the richness of its plant capitals.

◀ Wall relief in the temple of Deir el Medineh (Thebes). Ptolemaic period, second century B.C.

Temple of Isis on Philae Island (First Cataract). Ptolemaic–Imperial periods, first half of third century B.C.–beginning of second century A.D.





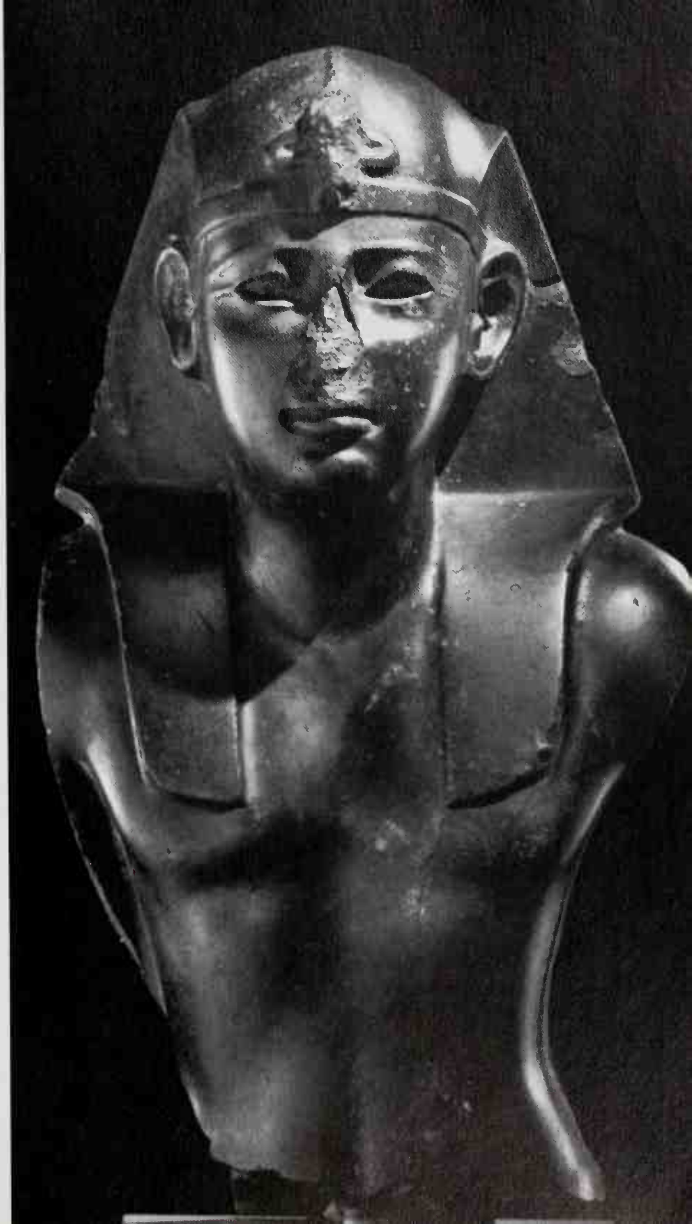
Ruins of the double temple at Kom Ombo. Ptolemaic–Imperial periods, second half of third century B.C.–beginning of third century A.D.

The structure at Kom Ombo departed from the canonical Egyptian method of temple construction. It was designed as a double temple, serving the separate, though parallel, worship of two gods. Sobek, the crocodile-god, and the hawk-headed Haroëris ("the Older Horus") were worshiped here together with their consorts and sons, thus constituting two triads or families of gods.

The division of the temple into two analogous but combined areas began at the pylon (no longer standing), which had two gateways. Only stumps remain of the columns in the court. To the right, the way leads to Sobek and, to the left, to Haroëris through a double gateway with two winged sun-disks in the hollow molding. This duplication is consistently followed throughout: the path to the interior of the temple leads through symmetrically placed halls, until the visitor reaches the sanctuaries at the rear of the temple.

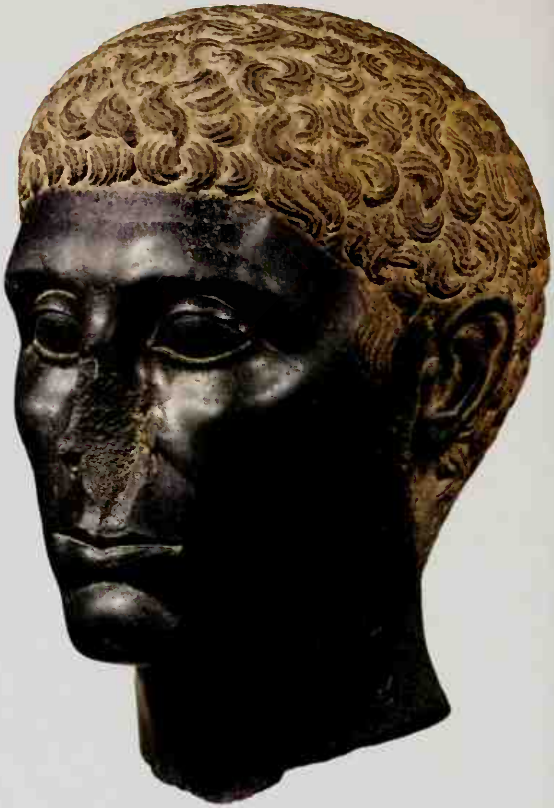
The association of the crocodile, Sobek, with the hawk, Horus, is usually taken to mean that the rulers of the Middle Kingdom residing in the Faiyum (the principal seat of crocodile worship) elevated Sobek to a local and royal god, who could then merge with the royal god Horus. The fact that the crocodile appears as one of the manifestations of the morning sun-god as early as the Old Kingdom would seem to indicate that the mythology of the sun is responsible for the amalgamation of the two gods. The hawk represents the sun during daylight as it flies across the sky, while the crocodile—aquatic animal—is associated with the nocturnal aspect of the sun's course, emerging in the morning from the primeval water in the shape of a crocodile or from the body of an animal. The inscriptions of the Kom Ombo temple regard Sobek as the *ka* of Ra, which might well signify that the sun survives its nocturnal phase owing to the crocodile's power of renewal. The ever-recurring tendency to combine both phases of the sun's course into one hybrid form (such as a griffin that is half lion and half hawk) led to the hybrid form of a crocodile with the head of a hawk. In architecture, this unified duality was realized in the temple at Kom Ombo.

Bust of a Ptolemaic king portrayed as a Pharaoh. Black diorite, height $17^1/_2''$. Ptolemaic period, c. 220–180 B.C. Probably from Alexandria. Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven



With all their turning toward the great prototypes of the Pharaonic age, artists still had enough leeway to combine the contemporary ideal concepts of monarchy with the ancient forms. In this statue, an unmistakable touch of charm and elegance is added to the dignity and physical strength of the Pharaohs. The risk of succumbing to a generalized ideal form was avoided by making significant departures from symmetry, thus individualizing the features of the bust. The technical mastery of the stone, which often subordinates the content in other replicas (see page 206), proves here to be the means of giving form to an idea, and of producing a masterpiece that bears its own stamp.

The so-called "Black Head." Diorite, height $16^1/_4$". Ptolemaic period, c. 80–50 B.C. From Mitrahine (Memphis). Brooklyn Museum, New York

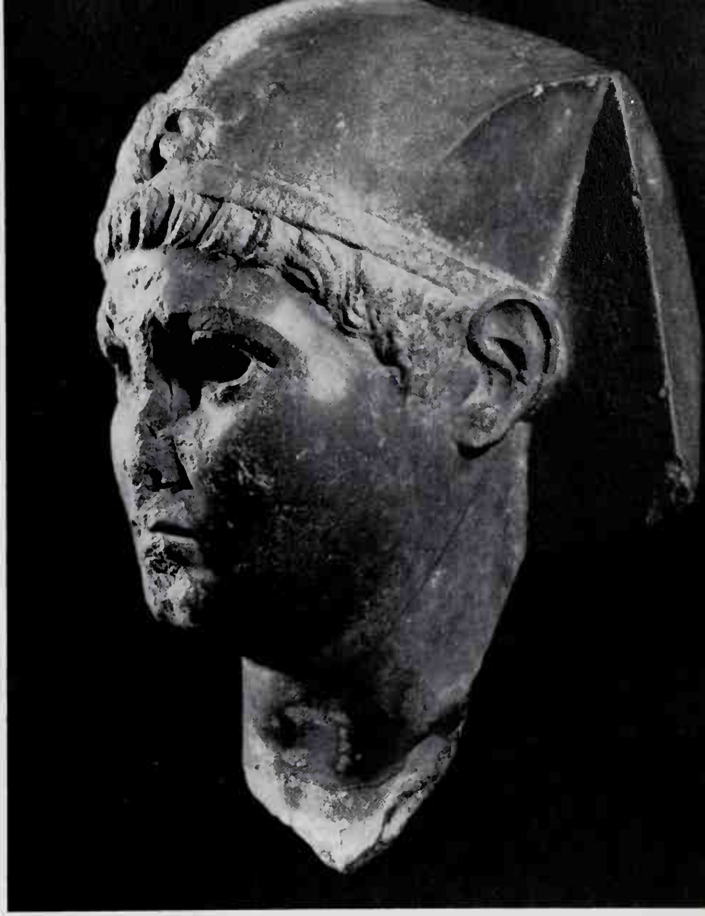


Berlin's "Green Head" (page 217) is the unsurpassable apogee of private sculpture of the Late period, and Brooklyn's "Black Head" masterpiece concludes the art of portraiture in ancient Egypt.

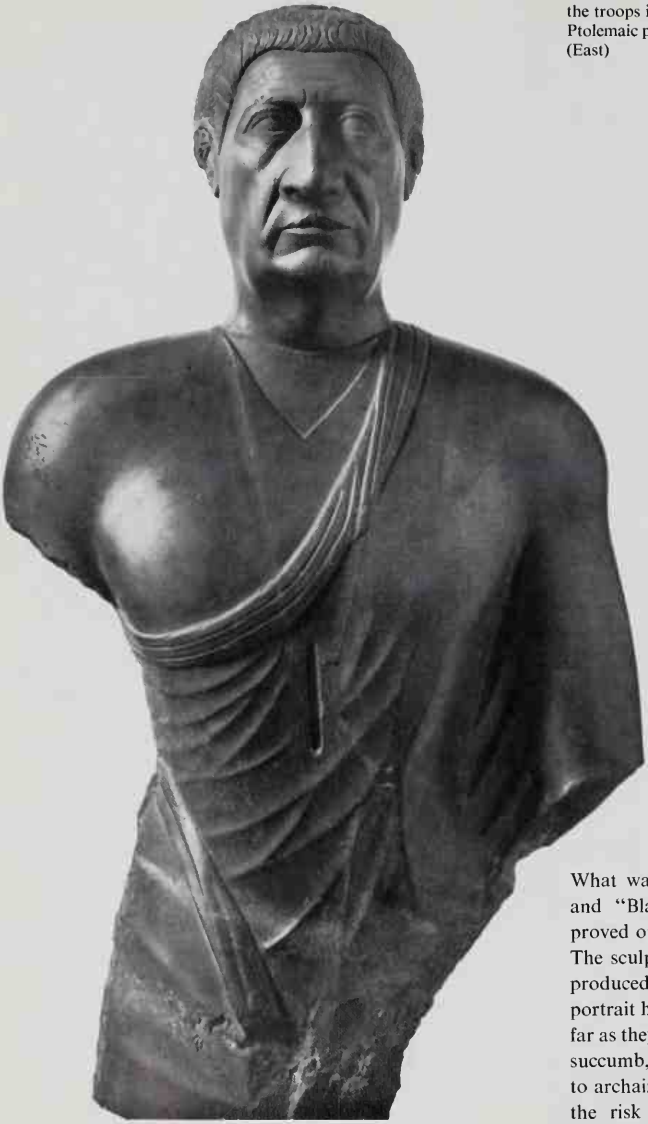
The colossal mass of the head, as well as the site where it was found, support the assumption that this must be an important personality in the temple of Ptah at Memphis (see page 167), perhaps even the high priest himself (B. von Bothmer). The portrait is that of a man possessing all the qualities required for the high office he is presumed to occupy. Notwithstanding the forceful look of his mouth and chin, what predominates is the impression of an extremely intelligent person who is chiefly attractive by his humanity.

The over-all artistic impression is heightened by the contrast between the smoothly polished face and the rough surface of the hair, curled in the Hellenistic manner.

Head of a Ptolemaic king. Dark schist, height 14⅝". Ptolemaic period, c. 250–200 B.C. Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven



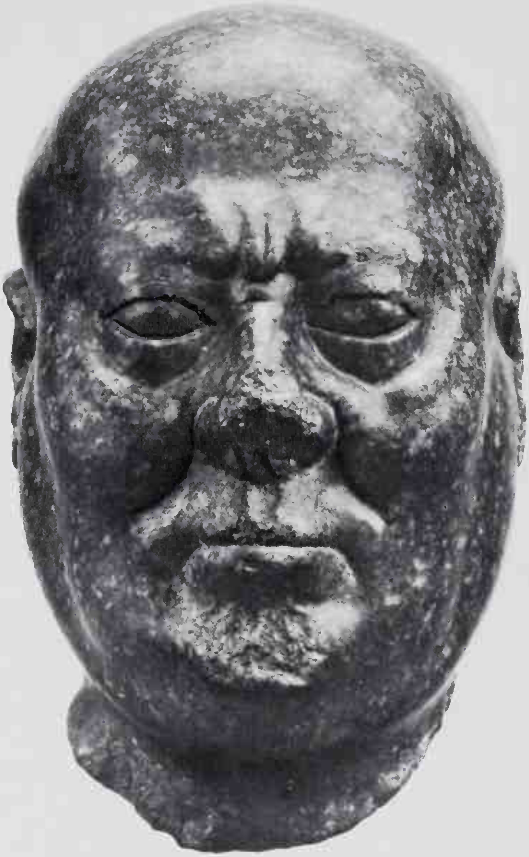
This head of a Ptolemaic king shows the attempt to combine ancient Egyptian tradition with contemporary Hellenistic taste. The Pharaonic headdress with the uraeus rests on a Greek coiffure; the features of the king also manifest unmistakable, soft and flattering elements that are un-Egyptian. Although the statue has been damaged and the eyes (which were inlaid according to the Egyptian custom) are missing, the spectator is moved by the king's countenance, for his youthful looks appear to be clouded over with earnestness and resignation.



Statue of Horsanebenebef, commander-in-chief of the troops in Lower Egypt. Granite, height 44$^1/_2$". Ptolemaic period, c. 80 B.C. State Museums, Berlin (East)

What was apparent in the "Green Head" and "Black Head" (pages 217, 228), is proved once again by two more instances. The sculpture of the last Egyptian period produced its greatest achievements in the portrait heads of private individuals, insofar as they were really portraits and did not succumb, like most of the royal portraits, to archaizing tendencies in which they ran the risk of stiffening into smooth and

Head of an old man (a priest?). Granite, height $5^1/_4''$. Ptolemaic period, second–first centuries B.C. The Louvre, Paris

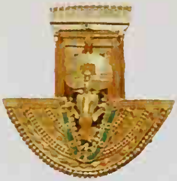


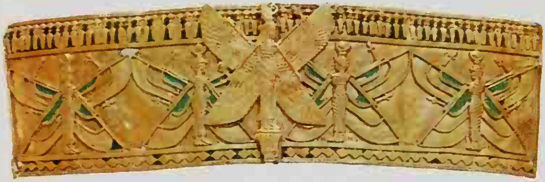
empty forms. There is nothing of academic fashion or idealizing egalitarianism in the faces of Horsanebenebef and of the "old man." Each is a mirror of an individual personality: the general is energetic, almost brutal, sober and self-confident, with an unapproachable frostiness. The old man, on the other hand, looks self-satisfied, easy-going, and sociable, though no less energetic and intelligent.

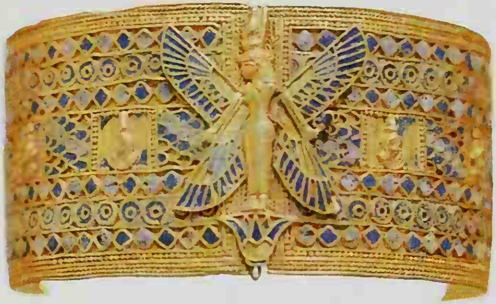
In these "character heads," which are related to the contemporary portraits of Republican Rome, Egyptian sculpture once again has presented us with remarkable works, which are a worthy culmination to the long chain of masterpieces that this art produced.

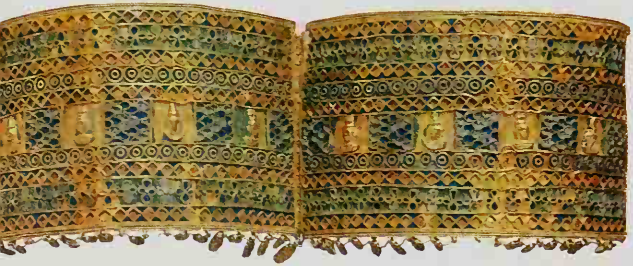
After the Ethiopians had retreated from Egypt, the capital was moved to Napata, far in the south. From that time on, Meroë (north of Khartoum) was the capital of the Kingdom of Ethiopia. The elements of civilization adopted from the Egyptians were retained, though increasingly diluted with native elements, to which Greek and then Roman influences were added.

In the interim, the Romans had intervened in the intradynastic conflicts of the last of the Ptolemies. Ptolemy XV, the son of Caesar and Cleopatra, was killed on the order of Augustus. From 30 B.C., Egypt belonged to Rome; it became the granary of the empire, which the emperor plundered as his private property (not as a Roman province). Under the Roman army of occupation, life went on as it had under the Ptolemies at first, but Egypt's economic decline was soon made evident in art.









Jewelry from the treasures of the tomb of Queen Amani-shaheto. Gold with colored glass paste. Roman period, c. 25–10 B.C. State Collection of Egyptian Art, Munich:

Shield-shaped ring, with ram's head and sun-disk, height $2^{1}/_{4}$"

Bracelet with four-winged goddesses beneath a frieze of uraeus snakes, width 2"

Cloisonné bracelet with a four-winged goddess, width $1^{7}/_{8}$"

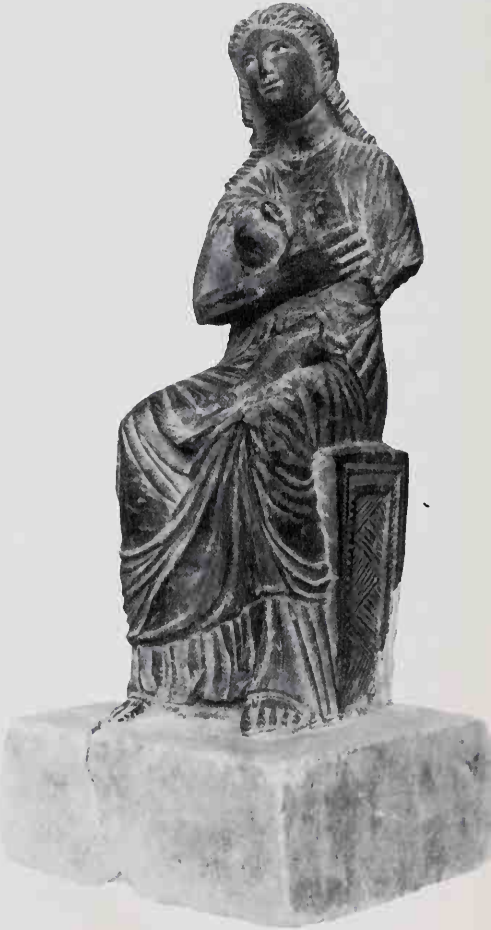
Cloisonné bracelet with gold pendants, width $2^{1}/_{2}$"

According to the oldest sources, Hathor ("House of Horus") was the goddess of the sky and mother of Horus. Later on came Isis, who displaced or absorbed her. The coupling of Isis and her brother and consort Osiris, together with their son Horus, made a triad that was able to offer the greatest hope of salvation to the faithful, even beyond the borders of Egypt and to the very end of time.

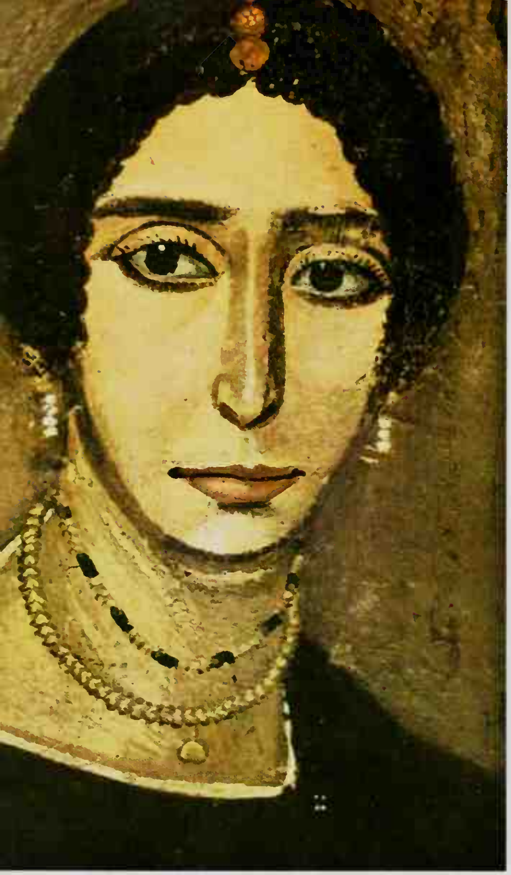
The miracle of creating new life out of death was originally understood by the Egyptians in wholly physiological terms. In conformity with the earthly pattern, the dead could be transformed into the youthful Horus only by the mediation of a female element. Isis, a great magician, conceived her son from her dead consort Osiris, brought him into the world, raised him, and saw to it that he was placed on the throne of Egypt as the rightful heir.

Isis, mother of the god and queen of the sky, nursing her son Horus, became the obvious symbol of the renewal of life—an image that survives in the Christian Madonna and Child.

Here, the old Egyptian motif (cf. page 78) has been reworked in Hellenistic-Roman form. The richly pleated garment of Isis is contemporary; what is also new is her emotional attitude, with her shoulders turned, which was not permitted in the Pharaonic Isis. The only ancient Egyptian emblem—cow's horns with the sun-disk on her head—is lost, though its existence may be inferred from the hole in which it was fixed. Unfortunately, almost the whole of the child Horus has also been broken off.



Isis with the child Horus. Serpentine with traces of gilding, on a limestone base, height (with the base) $16^{1}/_{8}''$. Roman period, beginning of the Christian era. From Asfun (Upper Egypt). State Collection of Egyptian Art, Munich



Mummy portrait of a woman. Encaustic painting on wood, height $21^{5}/_{8}$″. Roman period. First half of fourth century A.D. Probably from the Faiyum. The Louvre, Paris

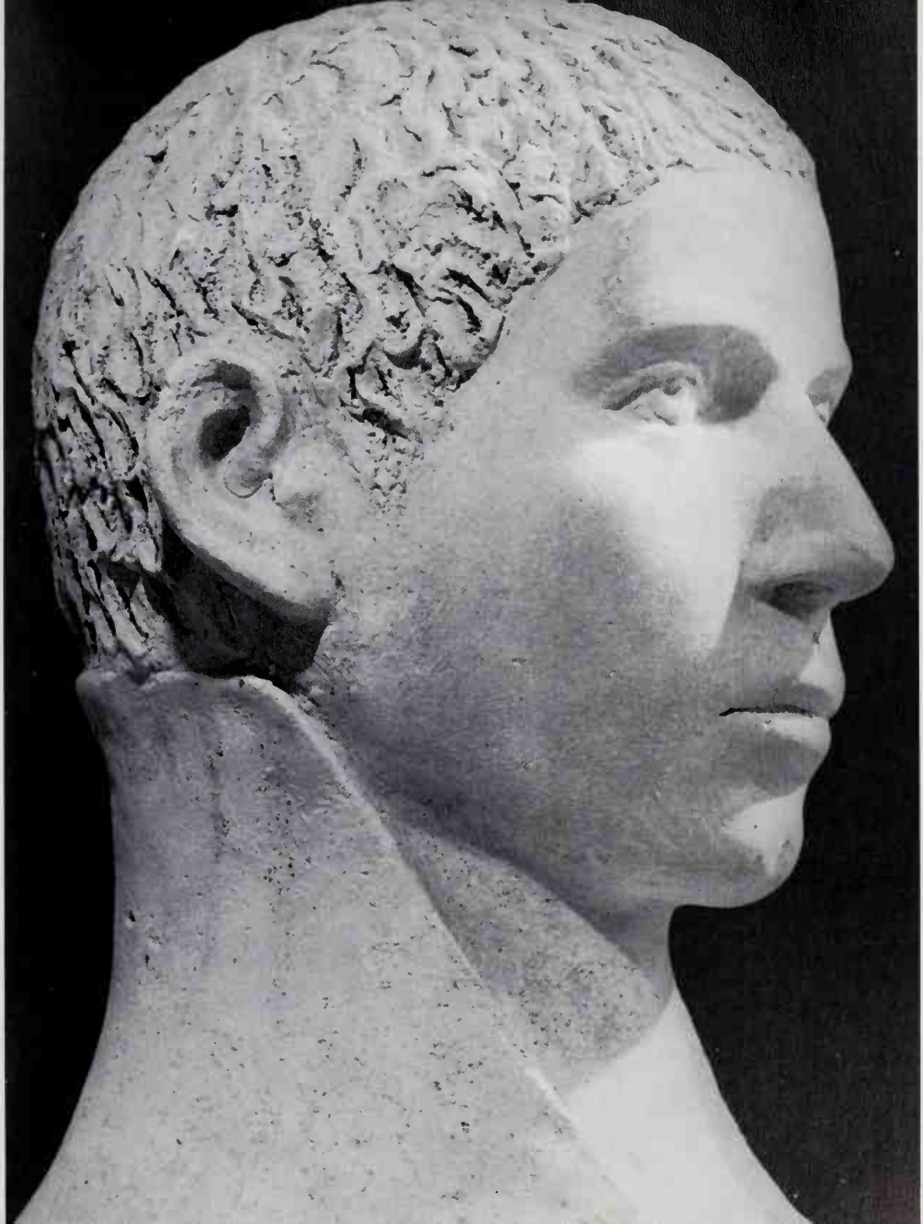
Head of a young man's mummy. Painted stucco, height $13^{3}/_{4}$″. Roman period, second century A.D. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim ▶

The old Egyptian mummy masks with sculpted faces were continued in the realistic stucco busts that depicted the head and chest of the deceased and were placed on the mummy. ▶

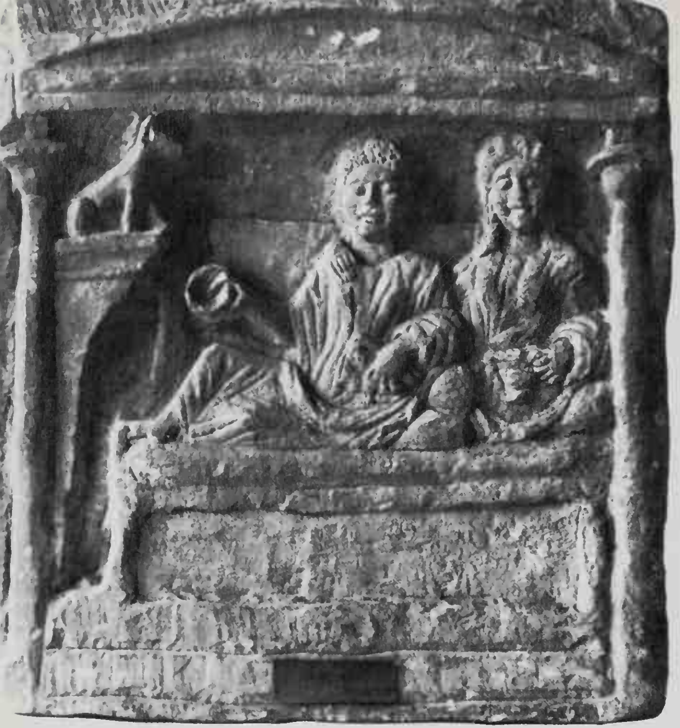
The Egyptian's desire to preserve his body after death and to afford his soul a home when it rose up into the sky and returned like the sun-bird, led to the practices of mummification. With all their efforts to preserve the individuality of the deceased, we can not usually term portraits the ancient Egyptian mummy masks made of linen, cardboard, or stucco (and also of gold or silver for the Pharaohs, see page 145). Identity was preserved primarily by the name and titles of the deceased painted on the mummy or the coffin.

However, when the Greeks and Romans adopted the Egyptian custom of mummification, they turned the face on the mummy into a portrait showing the individual features of the deceased. In this mummy portrait, therefore, we find an ancient Egyptian characteristic in Greco-Roman form. It is further evidence of the efforts made in other matters, too, to fuse together the indigenous culture and the newer influences.

The face is dominated by the long straight nose, which is flanked by two expressive, asymmetrical eyes, which look more alive for that very reason. Even without the sober jewelry, this portrait displays the natural gentility of the deceased woman.



The deceased led to Osiris by Anubis, scene on a painted mummy wrapping. Linen with encaustic painting, height 71¼″, width 49⅝″. Roman period, third century A.D. The Louvre, Paris ▶

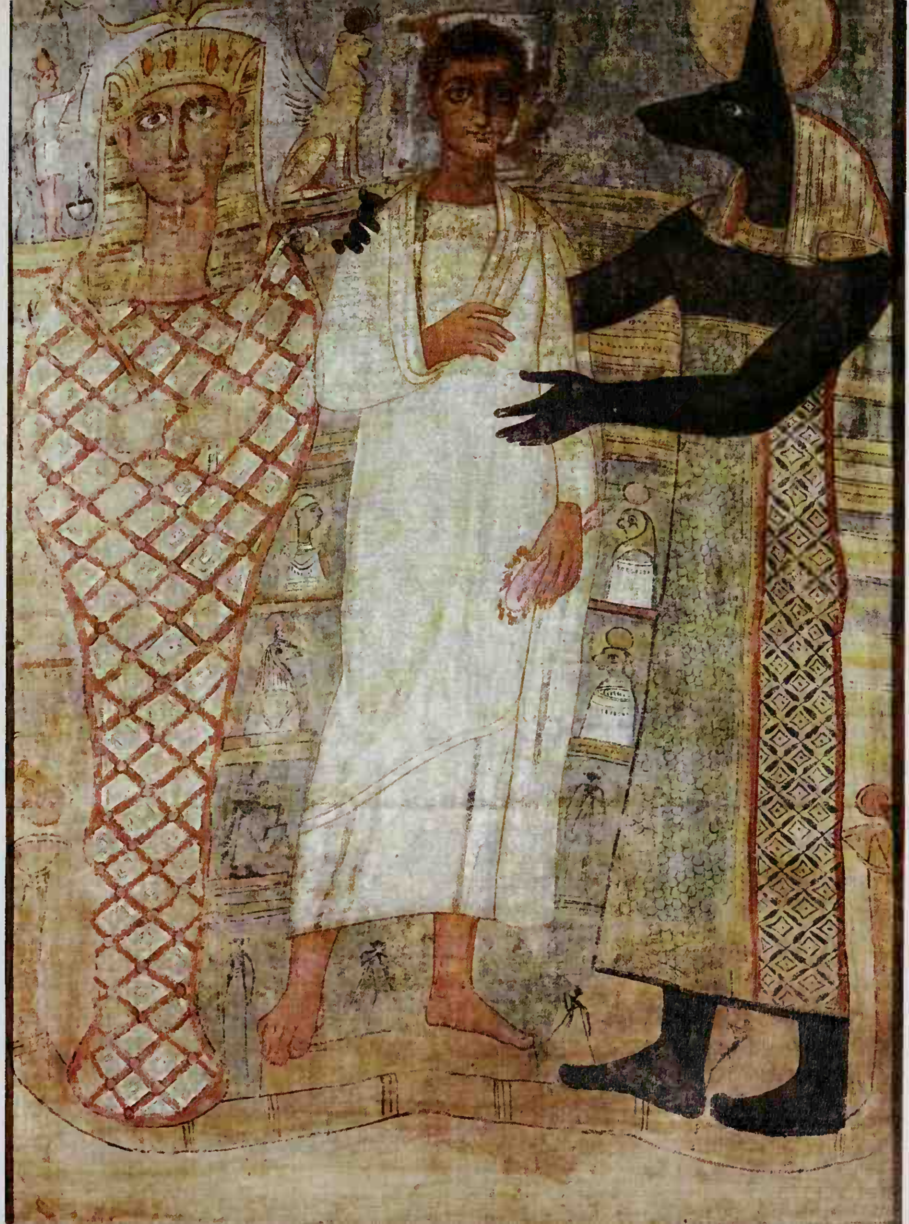


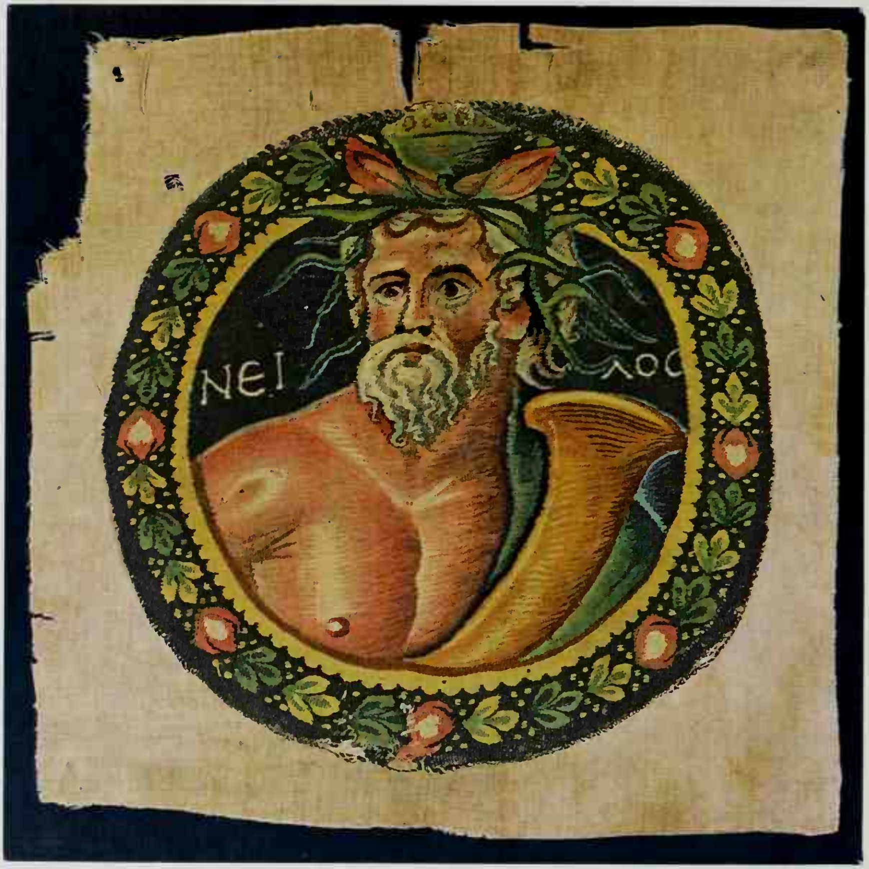
Guided by Anubis, the dead man appears in a Roman tunic before Osiris, the judge of the dead. Only Anubis is painted in profile in the old Egyptian manner of flat drawing; the frontal drawing of the dead man and Osiris is un-Egyptian. All the other elements and attributes (such as Osiris' ram's-head crown, the sun-disk on Anubis' head, the griffin, and the busts of the four Horus-sons as members of the death watch) are purely Pharaonic—and yet the execution is obviously a far cry from the art of the Pharaohs.

Funerary stele. Limestone, height 15½″. Roman period, third century A.D. From the region of Busiris. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

The married couple united in death is an old Pharaonic motif (cf. pages 34–35, 49, 57, 63, 68). This couple, very worldly and gay at a festive meal (see pages 114–15) can not conceal the fact that this is a scene of life after death (see page 129).

Nor is the Hellenistic treatment of this theme free from indications that this is a reunion in the hereafter, despite obvious pleasure on the faces. The little dog on the pilaster (at the left) is a stunted descendant of Anubis, the once so majestic god of the dead (see page 147). The enclosure of the dead man in a sort of cosmic structure consisting of two celestial supports that carry the gable of the sky above them is wholly Egyptian, appearing on funerary steles in many guises (cf. page 28). As in the Theban funerary feasts, the married couple is shown receiving symbolic offerings. The woman still lays her arm around the shoulders of her husband. Yet the deeper meaning of the married couple united on a deathbed must have remained the same as in the past: the conquest of death through procreation.





The god of the Nile, medallion on a tunic. Linen and wool, diameter 10″. Roman period, third or fourth century A.D. Pushkin Museum, Moscow

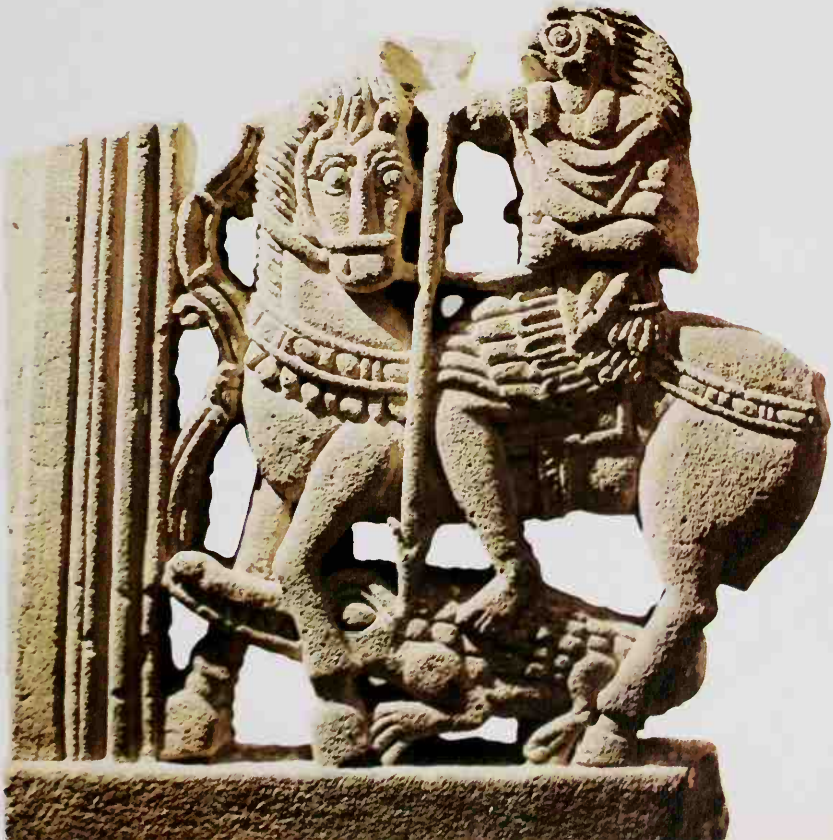
The Nile of ancient Egypt provided the country with water and food. His personification always denoted corpulence (cf. the sea-god at the top of page 56); on his head he wore a group of lotus flowers or papyrus stalks as symbols of the division of the country into Upper and Lower Egypt (cf. page 89).

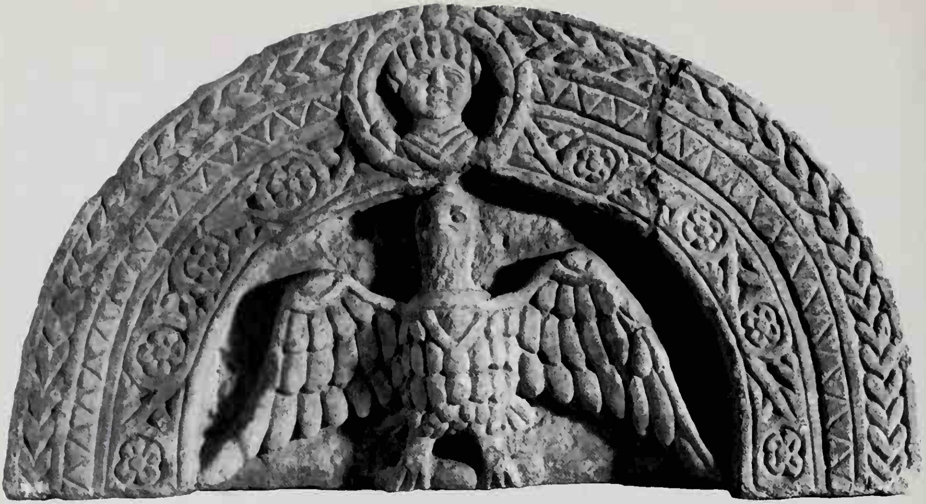
The Hellenistic Nile-god no longer bears the old name of the river, which was Hapi; his name "Neilos" is written beside him in Greek characters. Except for his corpulence, the only reminder of the ancient Egyptian portrayal is the wreath on his head, which might be a reinterpretation of the heraldic plants.

COPTIC PERIOD
(third–twelfth centuries A.D.)

The immemorial motif of the victory of the god of light over the powers of darkness (cf. page 156) has been modified here to fit the times: Horus, the hawk-god, no longer hurls his harpoon from his papyrus boat, but rides a horse like a Roman knight, and pierces the crocodile with a lance. The position of Coptic art as a bridge between that of the Pharaohs and of the Middle Ages is strikingly apparent in this forerunner of the Christian dragon slayer.

Horus, the Pharaonic lord of the sky, stabs his enemy Seth, in the shape of a crocodile. Sandstone, height 19¼″. Coptic period, fourth–sixth centuries A.D. Perhaps from El Basiti. The Louvre, Paris





Tympanum with the soul-bird. Limestone. Coptic period, first half of sixth century A.D. From Sheikh Abade (Antinoë). Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

The bird (eagle or dove?) found on Coptic funerary steles is thought to be a symbol of the soul. It is tempting to draw parallels to the ancient Egyptian concept of the soul (see page 200). The deceased is depicted on a medallion, wreathed in myrtle within the semicircle decorated with rosettes and myrtle leaves.

Pharaonic art was the province of the king, the court, and the propertied classes; its phases coincide with the historical epochs. The beginnings of Coptic art are at the other extreme: it is not the art of the aristocracy but of the people. It is the art of the inhabitants of Egypt during the first millennium A.D.—of peasants, artisans, monks, and citizens, both pagan and Christian. The upper classes adapted themselves to the civilization of the new rulers, but these were no longer Egyptians, but Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs.

After a long period of silence, the national Coptic art now rises to new heights, as it were from below. As a folk art, its resources, its materials, and its artistic abilities are naturally modest at first. But its Pharaonic legacy has evidently given it a few vital impulses which aid it to grow strongly and rapidly. Ancient Egyptian art served religion; similarly, after their conversion to Christianity, the prime objective of Coptic artists becomes the construction and decoration of churches and monasteries, and the care of the dead. Pharaonic art was able to express the content of its beliefs abstractly by employing symbolic forms. We shall meet this same ability in Coptic art.

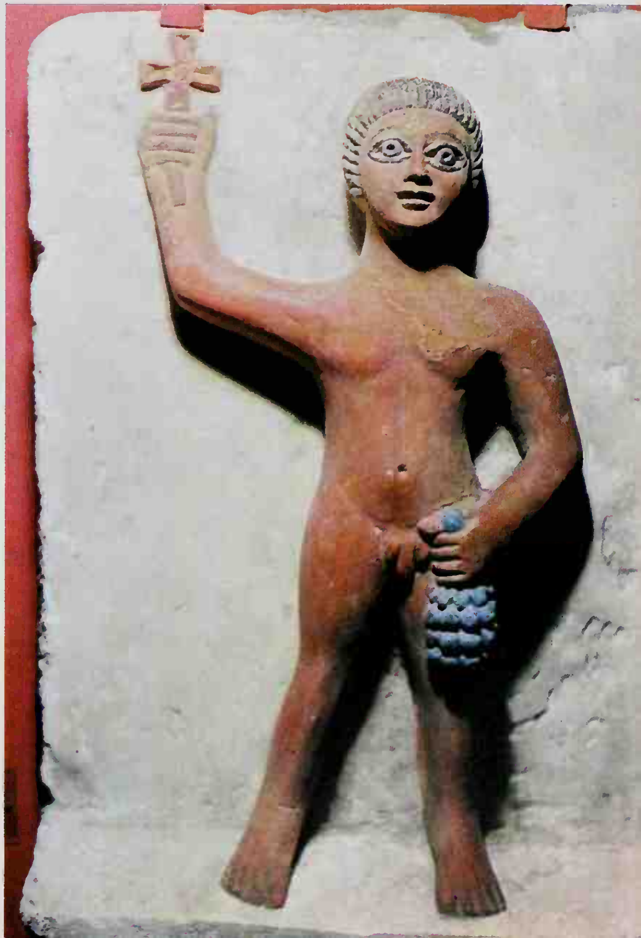
Unusual representations of boys or young men have come on the market from Antinoë during the last ten years. They normally show clothed boys squatting, in the characteristic attitude of Horus as a boy (Harpocrates), in a vaulted niche. Like Harpocrates, such a boy may hold a bunch of grapes in his hand. These boys were thought to be youthful members of a cult community that worshiped the child-deity and its celestial mother Isis, and they were termed "Isis mystes" (H. W. Müller).

There are other representations: for instance, a young man in a sleeved tunic standing in a similar arched niche and holding a cross in his right hand instead of a bunch of grapes; or a nude young man kneeling and holding up an arch with his outspread arms (here, the side walls of the niche are missing).

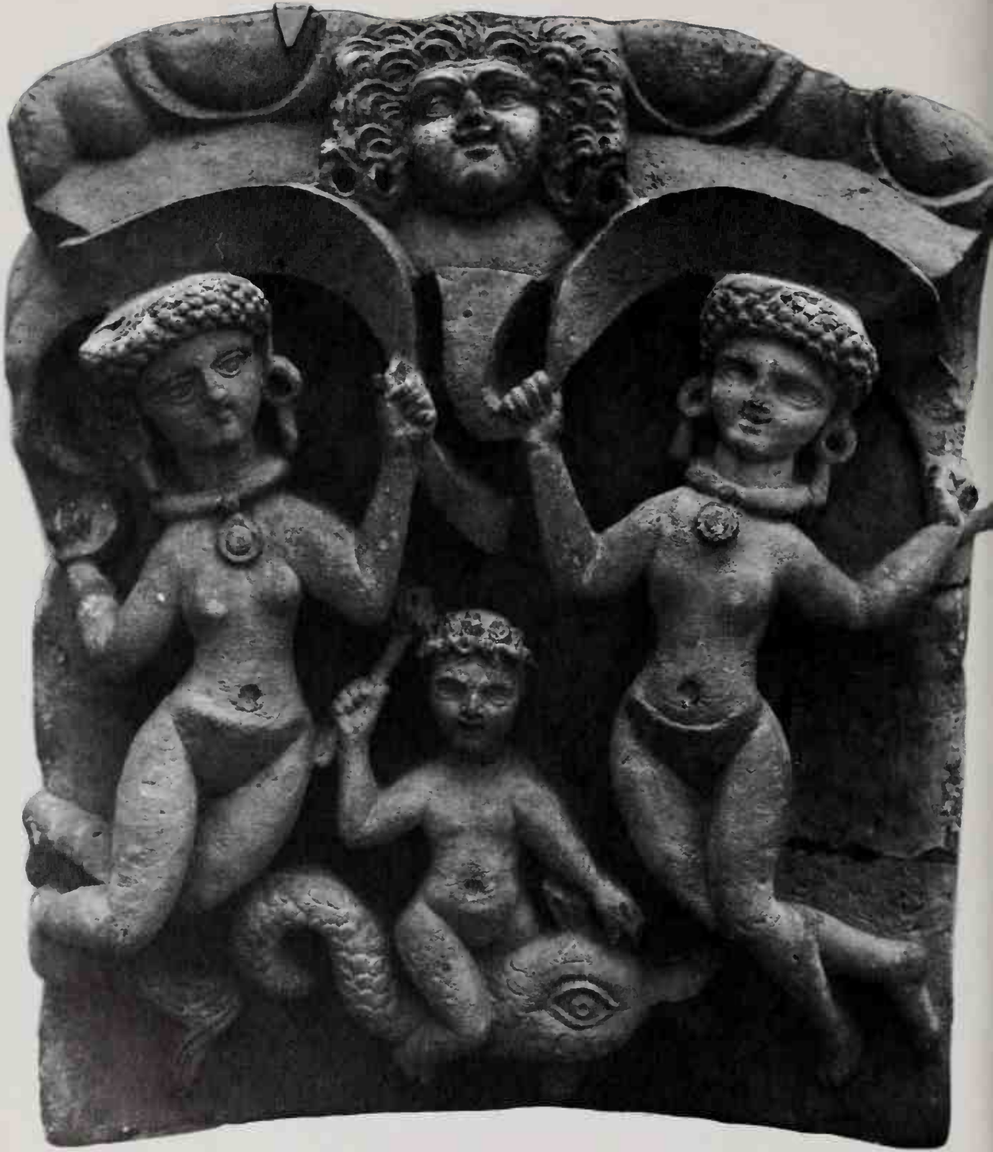
Our young man has something of all this: the bunch of grapes of the Isis mystes, the cross, the standing position, and the nudity of the kneeling youth (which, in turn, is like the old Egyptian figure of the boy Horus). What is new is the total absence of a nichelike recess for the figure, which stands free on the base plate.

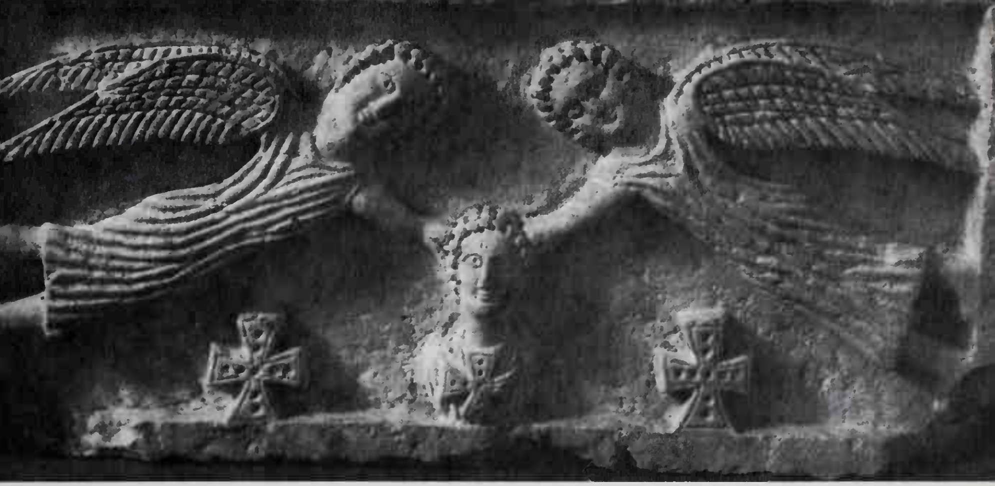
In Antinoë, the adherents of various sects—pagans, Christians, and pagans just converted to Christianity—must have worked in the same workshops, for the stylistic kinship is a close one. Typical of Coptic art are the giant, drilled-out "spectacle eyes."

It is regrettable that, with the growing demand for Coptic art, forgeries have appeared on the market. These are, of course, easier to manufacture than Pharaonic pieces, for here, too, we are dealing with a folk art.



Naked standing youth, fragment of a frieze (?). Painted limestone, height 19". Coptic period, fourth century A.D. From Sheikh Abade (Antinoë). State Museums, Berlin (West)





Amor riding a dolphin between two Nereids (sea nymphs). High relief, limestone, height 23½". Coptic period, fourth or fifth century A.D. From Ahnas (Herakleopolis). Municipal Museum of History and Art, Trieste

The Ascension of Christ. Limestone, width 19". Coptic period, fourth century A.D. Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

Two angels lay hands on the head of Christ, rising from the earth, and take Him with them to heaven. If the observer gains the impression at first glance that these angels are hovering in the air, it is not because of any flying movement in the sculpture (for this is not present, in view of the almost rodlike angels), but rather because he reads the symbols for flying: their horizontal bodies have a pair of wings attached to their shoulders in place of one arm. The art of the hieroglyph period also began in this way, inorganically, guided solely by the notion of what was essential.

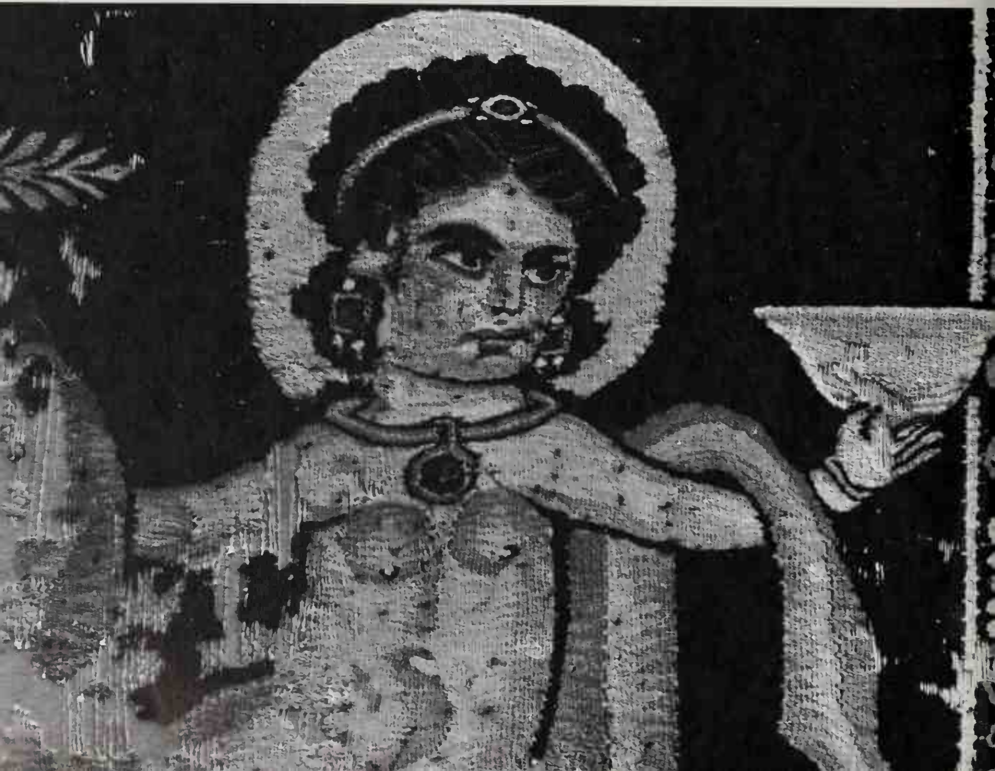
The multiplicity of motifs in Coptic art is a reflection of the many civilizations that came together in the gigantic crucible of Egypt, chiefly in Alexandria, during the first millennium A.D.: Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Persian, and finally Arabic civilizations were superimposed on the national elements, which had initially been Pharaonic. After the Copts had been Christianized, many "heathen" motifs were likewise Christianized (such as the mother of the god with her child or the dragon slayer) or adopted unchanged.

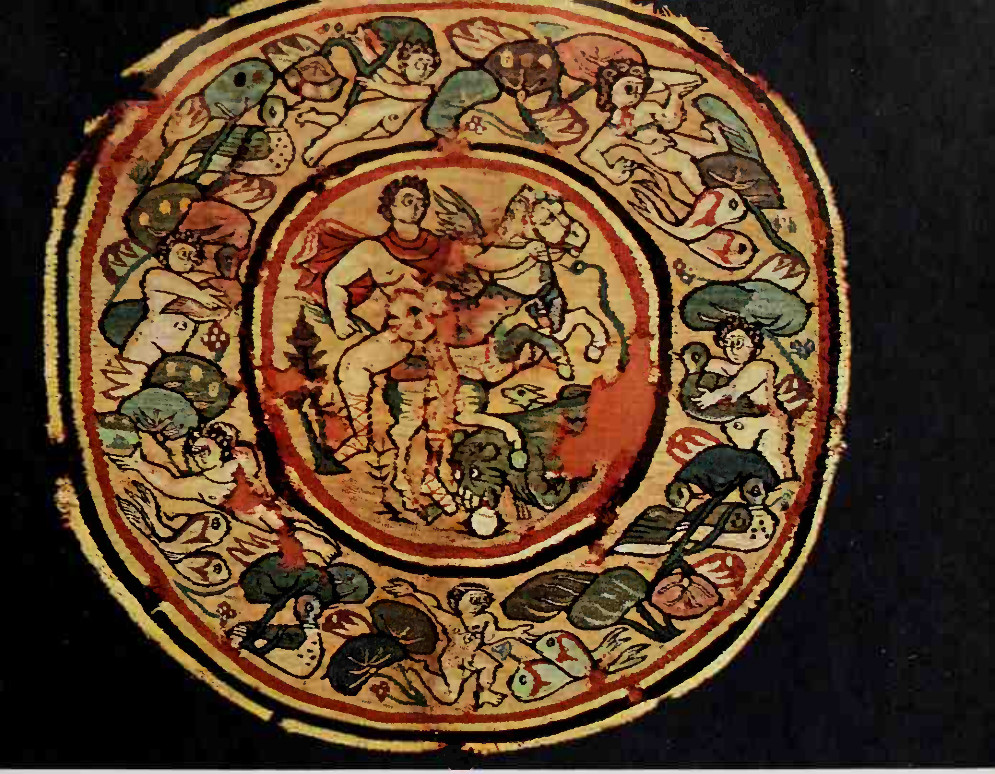
The motif of Amor, flanked by two Nereids holding veils and riding a dolphin (facing page), is still Hellenistic. A gorgonlike head floats over the scene. The relaxed movement of the bodies is already slowed down by a certain rigidity, which is typical of Coptic art and which may well be regarded as the legacy of the old Egyptian mode of representation. One of the essential features of Pharaonic art was the encasing of bodies within the axes of the space. Abstraction of the individual elements of the body, its dismemberment into hieroglyphs, was another ancient heritage. The sea nymphs with their excessively large heads, inorganically set on their shoulders, and their giant eyes are an illustration of this.

As a folk art, Coptic art does not possess large representative sculpture in precious materials, with which it could advertise its achievements. Its forte, in addition to architecture, was textiles, and in these creations the myths of Antiquity survived unchanged.

A Nereid with a nimbus, but otherwise nude except for a veil over her arm, and with a necklace and earrings as her only jewelry (cf. page 242), holds a bowl in her hand, the bowl extending into the border of vine tendrils. On the back, a branch of laurel breaks through the frame, projecting into the interior of the picture.

Nereid (Aphrodite ?), detail of a square insert. Wool on linen, insert 25 1/2 × 26", detail c. 13 3/8 × 18 1/2". Coptic period, date disputed: third–seventh centuries A.D. Cleveland Museum of Art

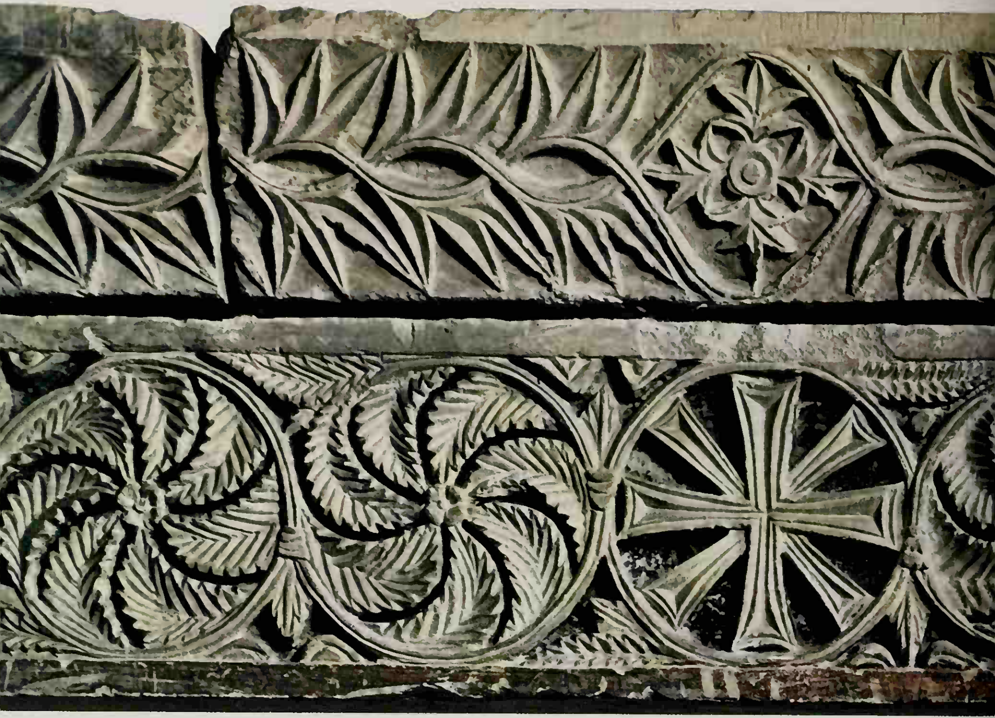




Bellerophon and the Chimera, detail of a wall hanging, the so-called "Shawl of Sabina." Wool on linen, height of the whole hanging 57", width 32¹/₄". Coptic period, fifth or sixth century A.D. From Sheikh Abade (Antinoë). The Louvre, Paris

Bellerophon, astride Pegasus, defeats the Chimera—a hybrid monster, part lion, part goat, part snake. This purely Hellenistic motif loses something of its Greek form in the Coptic work, for the analytical (hieroglyphic) mode of representation results in the dissolution of the classic proportions. (This may go so far as to have the body dismembered into its component parts.) Hand in hand with this dissolution of form, but also related to a simultaneous emptying of the original content, the decorative effect of the scene increases, not least as a result of the tasteful choice of colors.

The "Nilotic" scenes of the border have likewise become an ornament. With their *putti* among water lilies, fishes, and waterfowl, they recall similar motifs in the New Kingdom, where nude girls swam among aquatic plants, fishes, and waterfowl (cf. page 132). Here we see ancient Egyptian motifs finding their way back into Coptic art through a Hellenistic agency.

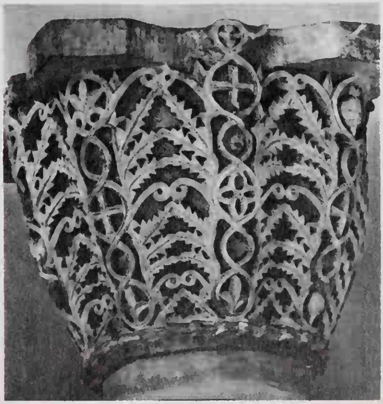


Frieze of tendrils. Limestone, width c. 7′. Coptic period, sixth–eighth centuries A.D. From Bawit. The Louvre, Paris

Characterizing Coptic art as folk art does not signify that no peak accomplishments were achieved in the decoration of churches and monasteries worthy of comparison with the monuments of the Pharaonic period. The construction and decoration of houses of worship are not necessarily dependent upon the wealth of the faithful or subsidies by the reigning lords.

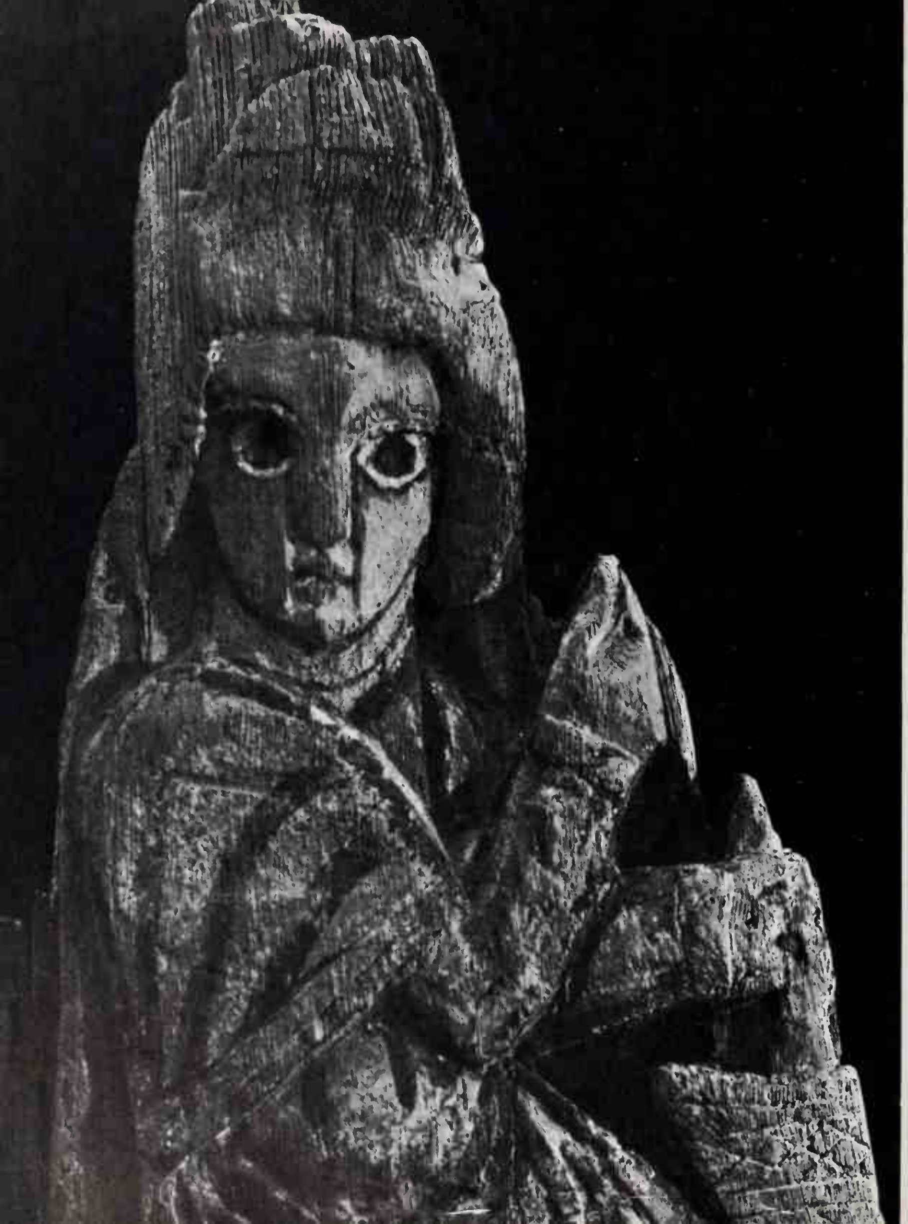
There is adequate evidence that components of plants were utilized in the architecture of the Pharaonic period (see pages 102–3, 225). Thus, the treatment of architectural ornament may sound an ancient Egyptian fundamental chord, despite its partial borrowings from foreign styles, principally the Byzantine. In any event, the pronounced stylization of elements taken from nature is ancient Egyptian. The tendrils of vines and the acanthus leaves are often combined in endless sequences, and they may include crosses, rosettes, persons, and

Basketwork capital. Limestone, height $21^{1}/_{4}''$. Coptic period, seventh or eighth century A.D. The Louvre, Paris



animals, or purely abstract decoration. The symbolic content of the individual figures, linked into an endless chain, would not have been too different from that of the old Egyptian concepts (see page 131); like the latter, they were aimed at the constant renewal of life, which thus became eternal.

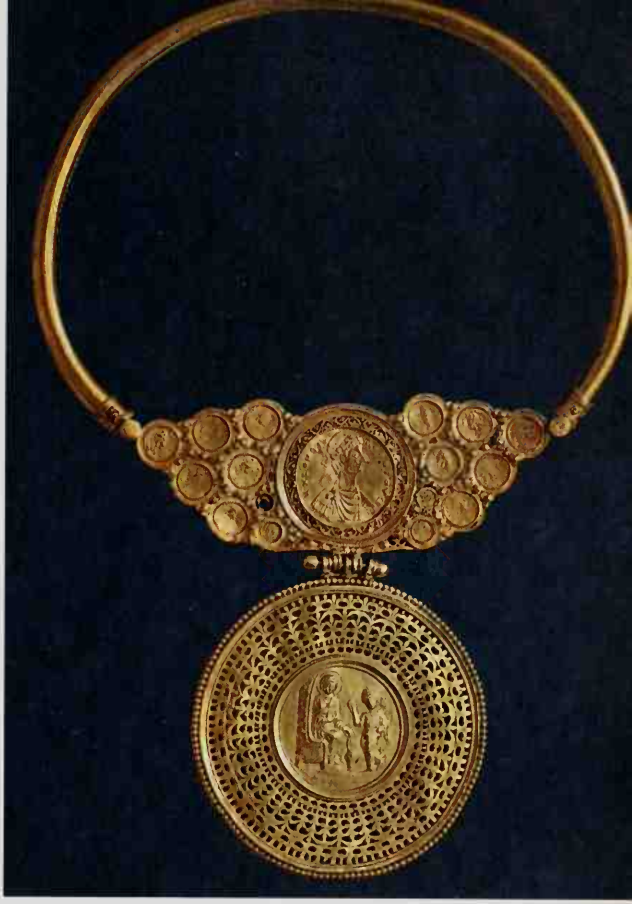
The technique of execution reached unparalleled heights; the basketwork capitals, done in high relief, are among the unquestioned masterpieces of Coptic art.



The Virgin Mary confronting the Angel of the Annunciation, detail of a fragmentary relief. Painted wood, height of the fragment 10″. Coptic period, fourth–sixth centuries A.D. The Louvre, Paris

The annunciation of the divine decree that a son intended for life on earth be conceived in a mortal woman may be found as far back as the temples of the New Kingdom (cf. page 212). What is un-Egyptian in this Coptic version of the Christian Annunciation is the turning of the face toward the plane surface, which may be intended to express the Virgin's turning away from the angel in alarm (the missing angel was at the right). The large Coptic eyes also enable us to read fright into the Virgin's face.

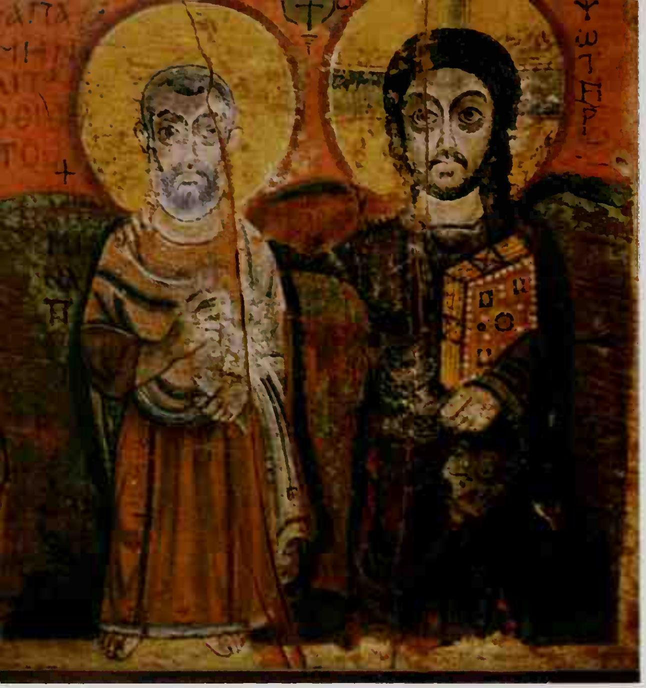
Many small carvings in wood, ivory, and bone have come down to us, testifying to the high level of Coptic artistic achievement.



Neck ring with coins showing portraits of emperors from Justinian to Flavius Mauritius (527–602) and a pendant depicting the Annunciation in a medallion. Gold, diameter 9¼″. Coptic period, fifth–seventh centuries A.D. From Sheikh Abade (Antinoë) or Tomet (near Assiut), according to the dealer's statement. State Museums, Berlin (West)

In view of the point of departure of Coptic art, we can not expect a highly developed technique of working in gold and silver. Yet all sorts of cult objects (mostly in bronze) were needed for divine services, and the achievements of the native workshops were quite respectable. The important piece of gold jewelry from Antinoë (or Tomet) is considered to be an import from the Byzantine Empire, though a Byzantine Madonna should really be standing.

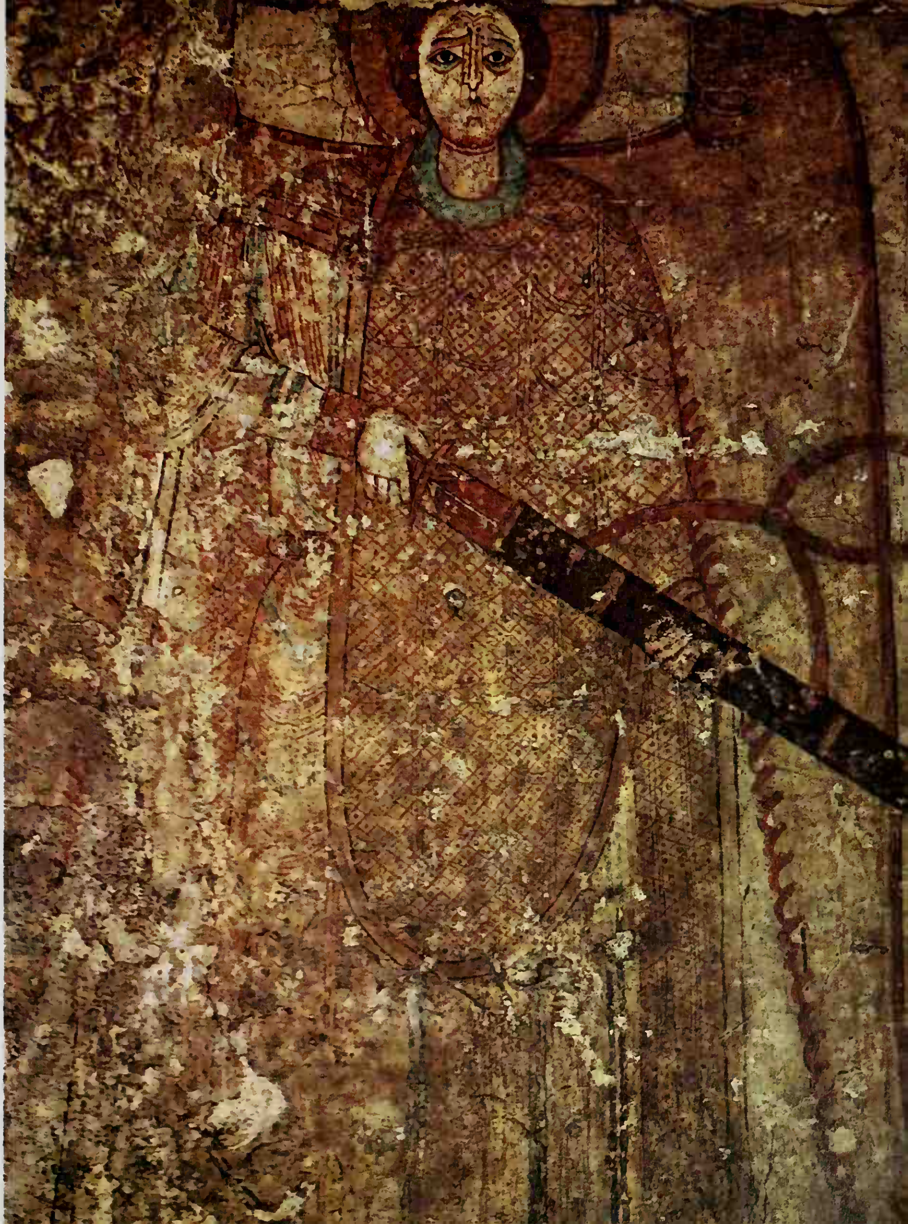
The Archangel Michael, fresco from the ▶ basilica of Faras (Nubia). Secco painting on lime plaster, over-all height 76", over-all width $52^3/_4$", height of the detail c. $45^1/_4$". End of eighth century A.D. National Museum, Warsaw

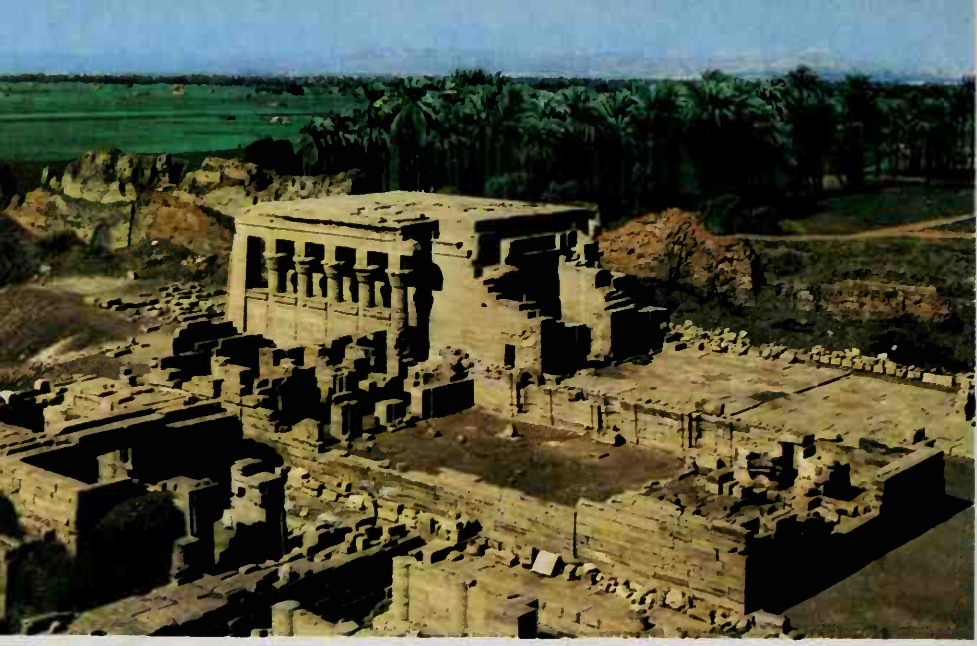


Nubia was converted to Christianity only at the end of the sixth century, not from Egypt, but from Byzantium. Thus, the art of Early Christian Nubia exhibits no Coptic influences. Rather, as the recent Polish excavations have proved, the Byzantine style of the missionaries was adopted together with the Gospels.

Icon with Christ and the Abbot Mena. Encaustic painting on wood, height $22^1/_2$". Coptic period, sixth or seventh century A.D. From Bawit. The Louvre, Paris

The monastery of Bawit in central Egypt has handed down to us an icon of its Abbot Mena, portrayed together with Christ, as well as numerous other masterpieces (cf. page 246). Notwithstanding certain Byzantine influences, this is the work of a Copt, as is proved by the Coptic script of the inscription—"P-Soter" (Saviour)—(at the top right; the name and title of the abbot are at the left). Christ holds the Scriptures in one hand and lays His right arm on the abbot's shoulder. This gesture, which we know from the days of Pharaonic Egypt, is hardly reconcilable with the style of the Byzantine court. Utilization of the two halos for a symbolism that recalls the time of the hieroglyphs is similarly ancient Egyptian. Just as the Egyptian sun used to rise between two hills, the two halos of Christ and Mena (Christ's halo being distinguished by its larger size as well as by a cross) lie above the hilly horizon. Thus, Christ is taking the abbot "above the line of the terrestrial horizon into the fiery sky up to the empyrean, where the divine sun of the Pharaohs rules, as it does above the horizon of the soil of Egypt" (P. du Bourguet).





Ruins of a Coptic church within the Pharaonic and Ptolemaic-Roman temple enclosure at Denderah. Length 131′, width 82′. Coptic period, late fifth century A.D.

The ruins of a Coptic basilica are situated on holy ground (Hathor, the goddess of the sky, was worshiped here ever since the time of the Old Kingdom), imbedded between two "birth houses" of the Pharaonic and Roman periods—that is, temples in which the birth of the divine child was celebrated (see page 222). At the left, behind (toward the west), we see the remains of the transverse entrance hall (narthex), through which access was had to the aisled nave (only the column bases remain to permit a reconstruction of the ground plan). Trough-shaped niches crowned by shell ornamentation are worked into the interior walls. At the eastern end (at the extreme right in the photograph) there is the apse with a clover-leaf pattern of five recesses.

The roots of Coptic art thrust through many non-Egyptian layers back to the Pharaonic past. It is from that source that it draws its abstraction of the essential and its revival of the symbol. Fed from such a source, Coptic art is ready to make the transition to the art of the European Middle Ages.

It is a symbol of a very special kind that, here in Denderah, the houses of worship of the Pharaohs, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Christians lie side by side, reminding us that Egypt, Antiquity, and the West are linked together by a common bond.

Chronological Table

PREHISTORIC PERIOD (fourth millennium B.C.)

c. 4000 B.C.	Stone and Copper Age (Tasian and Badarian cultures)
c. 3700–3200 B.C.	Amratian culture (Nagadah I)
c. 3200–3000 B.C.	Gerzean culture (Nagadah II)

PREDYNASTIC PERIOD (c. 3000 B.C.) Unification of the Kingdom

ARCHAIC OR THINITE PERIOD (First and Second Dynasties)

c. 2950–2800 B.C.	First Dynasty (Thinis)
c. 2800–2670 B.C.	Second Dynasty (Thinis)

OLD KINGDOM (Third to Eighth Dynasties)

c. 2670–2590 B.C.	Third Dynasty (Memphis)
c. 2590–2470 B.C.	Fourth Dynasty (Memphis)
c. 2470–2320 B.C.	Fifth Dynasty (Memphis)
c. 2320–2160 B.C.	Sixth Dynasty (Memphis)
c. 2160–2135 B.C.	Seventh and Eighth Dynasties (Memphis)

FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (Ninth to Eleventh Dynasties)

c. 2135–2040 B.C.	Ninth and Tenth Dynasties (Herakleopolis)
contemporaneous with above	Eleventh Dynasty (Thebes)

MIDDLE KINGDOM (Eleventh to Thirteenth Dynasties)

c. 2040–1991 B.C.	Eleventh Dynasty (Thebes)
c. 1991–1785 B.C.	Twelfth Dynasty (Memphis)
c. 1785–1650 B.C.	Thirteenth Dynasty (Memphis)

SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties)

c. 1715–1650 B.C.	Fourteenth Dynasty (nomarchs in Lower Egypt)
c. 1650–1545 B.C.	Fifteenth Dynasty (Hyksos in Lower and Middle Egypt)
c. 1650–1550 B.C.	Sixteenth Dynasty (vassals of the Hyksos in Lower and Middle Egypt)
contemporaneous with above	Seventeenth Dynasty (Thebes)

NEW KINGDOM (Eighteenth to Twentieth Dynasties)

c. 1550–1305 B.C.	Eighteenth Dynasty (Thebes)
c. 1305–1190 B.C.	Nineteenth Dynasty (Memphis, then in the Eastern Delta at Tanis)
c. 1190–1070 B.C.	Twentieth Dynasty (Eastern Delta at Tanis)

BEGINNING OF THE LATE PERIOD
OR THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (Twenty-First to Twenty-Fourth Dynasties)

c. 1070–950 B.C.	Twenty-First Dynasty (Tanis)
contemporaneous with above	Thebaid independent under the high priests of Amon
c. 950–720 B.C.	Twenty-Second Dynasty (Libyans in Bubastis)
c. 810–720 B.C.	Twenty-Third Dynasty (local kings in Tanis)
c. 730–715 B.C.	Twenty-Fourth Dynasty (local kings in Saïs)

LATE PERIOD (Twenty-Fifth to Thirty-First Dynasties)

c. 750–655 B.C.	Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (Ethiopians in Thebes)
664–525 B.C.	Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (Saïtes in Saïs)
525–404 B.C.	Twenty-Seventh Dynasty (First Persian period)
404–399 B.C.	Twenty-Eighth Dynasty (Amyrtaios of Saïs)
399–380 B.C.	Twenty-Ninth Dynasty (Mendes)
380–343 B.C.	Thirtieth Dynasty (Sebennytos)
343–332 B.C.	Thirty-First Dynasty (Second Persian period)

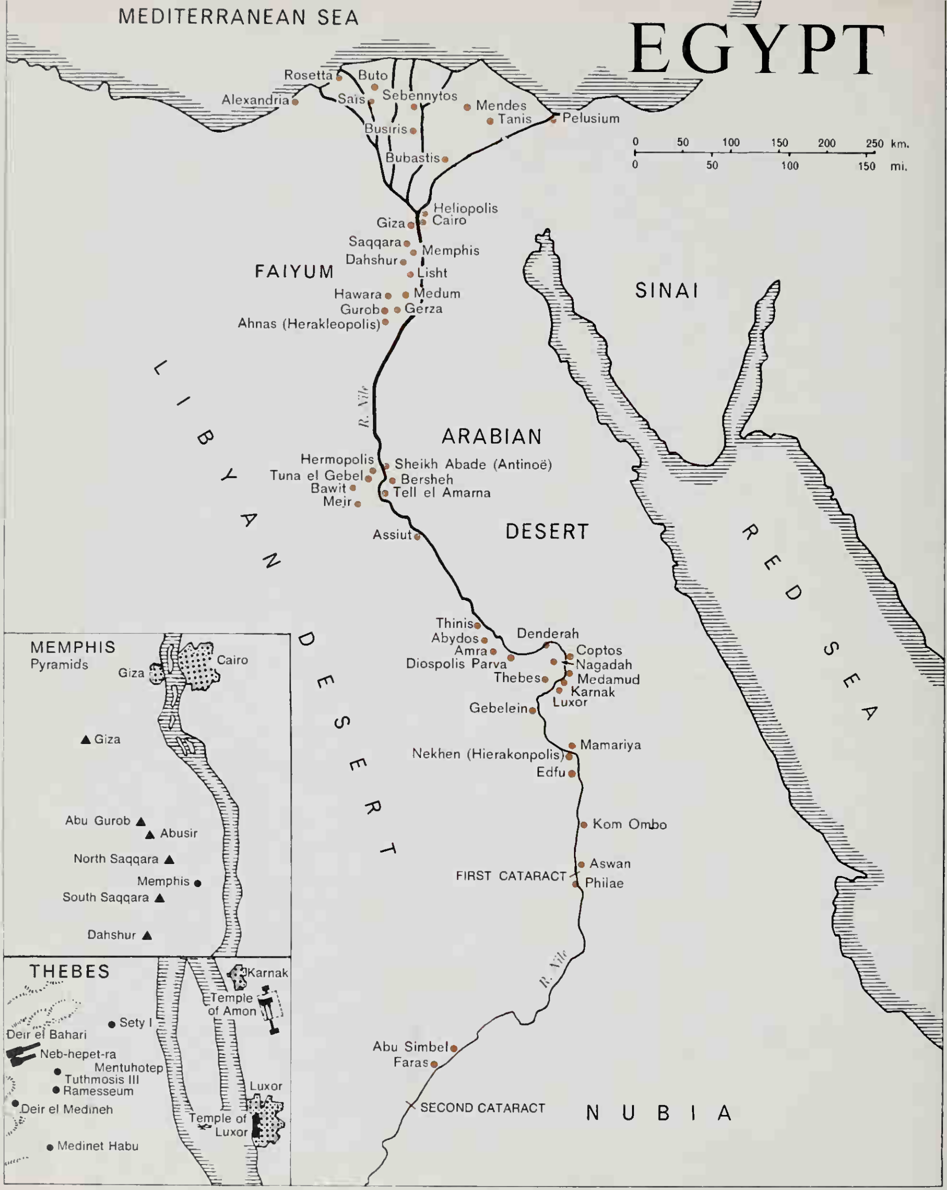
GREEK PERIOD (332–30 B.C.)

332–323 B.C.	Alexander the Great
323–304 B.C.	Struggles of the Diodochi
304–30 B.C.	Ptolemies

ROMAN PERIOD (30 B.C.–A.D. 395)

BYZANTINE PERIOD (395–641)

ISLAMIC PERIOD (after 641)


EGYPT
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Rosetta
Buto
Alexandria
Sais
Sebennytos
Mendes
Tanis
Pelusium
Busiris
Bubastis
0 50 100 150 200 250 km.
0 50 100 150 mi.
Heliopolis
Giza
Cairo
Saqqara
Memphis
Dahshur
FAIYUM
Lisht
Hawara
Medum
Gurob
Gerza
Ahnas (Herakleopolis)
SINAI
LIBYAN DESERT
R. Nile
ARABIAN
DESERT
Hermopolis
Sheikh Abade (Antinoë)
Tuna el Gebel
Bersheh
Bawit
Tell el Amarna
Mejr
Assiut
RED SEA
Thinis
Abydos
Denderah
Amra
Coptos
Diospolis Parva
Nagadah
Thebes
Medamud
Karnak
Luxor
Gebelein
Mamariya
Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)
Edfu
Kom Ombo
Aswan
FIRST CATARACT
Philae
R. Nile
Abu Simbel
Faras
SECOND CATARACT
NUBIA
MEMPHIS
Pyramids
Giza
Cairo
Giza
Abu Gurob
Abusir
North Saqqara
Memphis
South Saqqara
Dahshur
THEBES
Karnak
Temple of Amon
Sety I
Deir el Bahari
Neb-hepet-ra
Mentuhotep
Tuthmosis III
Ramesseum
Luxor
Deir el Medineh
Temple of Luxor
Medinet Habu

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